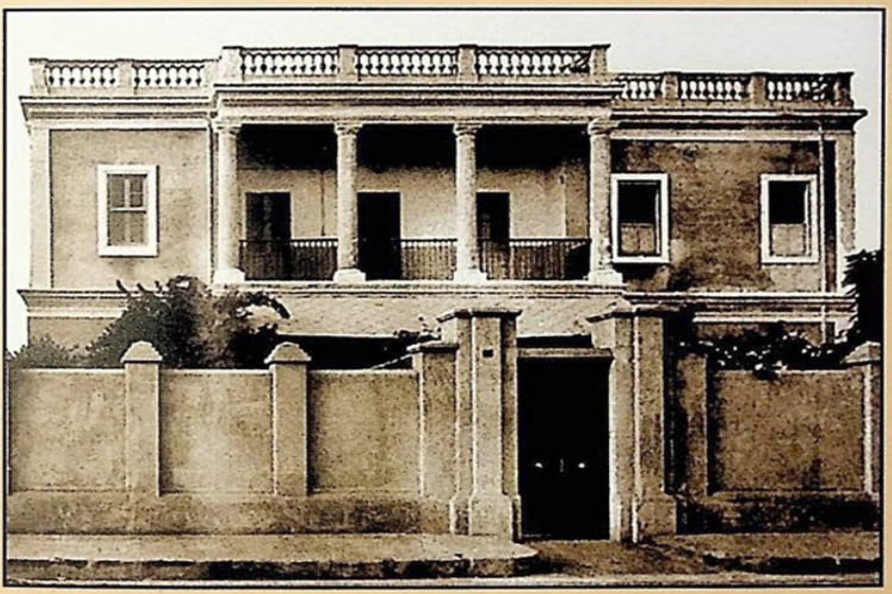
EVENING TALKS

with Sri Aurobindo



Recorded by A. B. Purani

EVENING TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

Recorded by
A. B. Purani

Sri Aurobindo Ashram
Pondicherry

FIRST EDITION
First Series 1959
Second Series 1961
Third Series 1966

SECOND EDITION
First Series 1970
Second Scries 1974

THIRD EDITION
Single volume 1982

FOURTH EDITION
Single volume (revised) 2007
Second impression 2018

© Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust 1982, 2007
Published by Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication Department
Pondicherry 605 002
Web http://www.sabda.in

Printed at Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry
PRINTED IN INDIA

Table of Contents

Introduction.....5
1. Meeting the Master.....19
2. On Books and Letters.....71
On Books.....71
On Letters.....142
3. On Medicine.....195
4. On Art.....256
5. On Poetry.....271
6. On Beauty.....299
7. On Congress and Politics.....311
8. On Non-Violence.....350
9. On Sadhana.....365
10. On Vedic Interpretation.....429
11. On Education.....435
12. On Miracles.....442
13. On Psychology.....467
14. On Movements.....533
15. On The Gods and Asuras.....546
16. Talks of 15 August 1923-1926.....583
17. Talks of December 1938.....621
18. Talks of January 1939.....693
19. Talks of February-May 1939.....798
20. Talks of November-December 1939.....822
21. Talks of 1940.....835
22. Talks of 1941-1943.....881

Life Sketch of A. B. Purani.....895
Note on the Text.....896
List of Topics in Each Talk.....899

Publisher's Note

Evening Talks is a record of Sri Aurobindo's talks with disciples during two periods, 1923-1926 and 1938-1943. The recorder, A.B. Purani, made detailed notes on each talk immediately after it took place and later expanded them into readable conversations. The talks were first published in a series of three books in 1939, 1961 and 1966; they were brought out in a single volume in 1982. The present edition is a revised version of the 1982 edition.

To the Reader

The reader is requested to note that Sri Aurobindo is not responsible for these records as he had no opportunity to see them. So, it is not as if Sri Aurobindo said exactly these things but that I remember him to have said them. All I can say is that I have tried to be as faithful in recording them as I was humanly capable. That does not minimise my personal responsibility which I fully accept.

A. B. PURANI

Participants in the Evening Talks

FIRST PERIOD OF TALKS
1923-1926

Regular participants	*Occasional participants*
Barindra Kumar Ghose	S. Duraiswami Iyer
Nolini Kanta Gupta	Rajani Palit
Bijoy Kumar Nag	Anilbaran Roy
Suresh Chakravarty (Moni)	T. Kodandarama Rao
K. Aravamudachari (Amrita)	Purushottam Patel
V. P. Varma (Satyen)	Naren Das Gupta
Tirupati	Sris Goswami
K. Rajangam	
Khitish Chandra Dutt	
A. B. Purani	
P. B. St. Hilaire (Pavitra)	
Champaklal	
Purnachand	
Kanai Ganguly	

SECOND PERIOD OF TALKS
1938-1943

Regular participants	*Occasional participants*
Nirodbaran	Dr. Manilal Parekh
Champaklal	Dr. Srinivasa Rao
Satyendra Thakore	Dr. Savoor
Mulshankar	
A. B. Purani	
Becharlal	

INTRODUCTION

I

The question which Arjuna asks Sri Krishna in the Gita (second chapter) occurs pertinently to many about all spiritual personalities: "What is the language of one whose understanding is poised? How does he speak, how sit, how walk?" Men want to know the outer signs of the inner attainment, — the way in which a spiritual person differs outwardly from other men. But all the tests which the Gita enumerates are inner and therefore invisible to the outer view. It is true also that the inner or the spiritual is the essential and the outer derives its value and form from the inner. But the transformation about which Sri Aurobindo writes in his books has to take place in nature, because according to him the divine Reality has to manifest itself in nature. So, all the parts of nature — including the physical and the external — are to be transformed. In his own case the very physical became the transparent mould of the Spirit as a result of his intense Sadhana. This is borne out by the impression created on the minds of sensitive outsiders like Sj. K. M. Munshi who was deeply impressed by his radiating presence when he met him after nearly forty years.

The Evening Talks collected here may afford to the outside world a glimpse of his external personality and give the seeker some idea of its richness, its many-sidedness, its uniqueness. One can also form some notion of Sri Aurobindo's personality from the books in which the height, the universal sweep and clear vision of his integral ideal and thought can be seen. His writings are, in a sense, the best representative of his mental personality. The versatile nature of his genius, the penetrating power of his intellect, his extraordinary power of expression, his intense sincerity, his utter singleness of purpose — all these can be easily felt by any earnest student of his works. He may discover even in the realm of

mind that Sri Aurobindo brings the unlimited into the limited. Another side of his dynamic personality is represented by the Ashram as an institution. But the outer, if one may use the phrase, the human side of his personality, is unknown to the outside world because from 1910 to 1950 — a span of forty years — he led a life of outer retirement. No doubt, many knew about his staying at Pondicherry and practising some kind of very special Yoga to the mystery of which they had no access. To some, perhaps, he was living a life of enviable solitude enjoying the luxury of a spiritual endeavour. Many regretted his retirement as a great loss to the world because they could not see any external activity on his part which could be regarded as 'public', 'altruistic' or 'beneficial'. Even some of his admirers thought that he was after some kind of personal salvation which would have very little significance for mankind in general. His outward non-participation in public life was construed by many as lack of love for humanity.

But those who knew him during the days of the national awakening — from 1900 to 1910 — could not have these doubts. And even these initial misunderstandings and false notions of others began to evaporate with the growth of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram from 1927 onwards. The large number of books published by the Ashram also tended to remove the idea of the other-worldliness of his Yoga and the absence of any good by it to mankind.

This period of outer retirement was one of intense Sadhana and of intellectual activity — it was also one during which he acted on external events, — though he was not dedicated outwardly to a public cause. About his own retirement he writes: "But this did not mean, as most people supposed, that he [Sri Aurobindo] had retired into some height of spiritual experience devoid of any further interest in the world or in the fate of India. It could not mean that, for the very principle of his Yoga was not only to realise the Divine and attain to a complete spiritual consciousness, but also to take all

life and all world activity into the scope of this spiritual consciousness and action and to base life on the Spirit and give it a spiritual meaning. In his retirement Sri Aurobindo kept a close watch on all that was happening in the world and in India and actively intervened, whenever necessary, but solely with a spiritual force and silent spiritual action; for it is part of the experience of those who have advanced in yoga that besides the ordinary forces and activities of the mind and life and body in Matter, there are other forces and powers that can and do act from behind and from above; there is also a spiritual dynamic power which can be possessed by those who are advanced in spiritual consciousness, though all do not care to possess or, possessing, to use it and this power is greater than any other and more effective. It was this force which, as soon as he attained to it, he used at first only in a limited field of personal work, but afterwards in a constant action upon the world forces."[1]

Twice he found it necessary to go out of his way to make public pronouncements on important world-issues, which shows distinctly that renunciation of life is not a part of his Yoga. "The first was in relation to the Second World War. At the beginning he did not actively concern himself with it, but when it appeared as if Hitler would crush all the forces opposed to him and Nazism dominate the world, he began to intervene." [2]

The second was with regard to Sir Stafford Cripps' proposal for the transfer of power to India.

Over and above Sadhana, writing work and rendering spiritual help to the world during his apparent retirement there were plenty of other activities of which the outside world has no knowledge. Many prominent as well as less known persons sought and obtained interviews with him during these years. Thus, among

[1] *Sri Aurobindo and His Ashram*, 1985, p. 22.

[2] *Ibid*.

well-known persons may be mentioned C.R. Das, Lala Lajpat Rai, Sarala Devi, Dr. Munje, Khasirao Jadhav, Tagore, Sylvain Levy. The great national poet of Tamil Nadu, S. Subramanya Bharati, was in contact with Sri Aurobindo for some years during his stay at Pondicherry; so was V.V.S. Aiyar. The famous V. Ramaswamy Aiyangar — Va Ra of Tamil literature[3] — stayed with Sri Aurobindo for nearly three years and was influenced by him. Some of these facts have been already mentioned in *The Life of Sri Aurobindo.*

Jung has admitted that there is an element of mystery, something that baffles the reason, in human personality. One finds that the greater the personality the greater is the complexity. And this is especially so with regard to spiritual personalities — whom the Gita calls Vibhutis and Avatars.

Sri Aurobindo has explained the mystery of personality in some of his writings. Ordinarily by personality we mean something which can be described as "a pattern of being marked out by a settled combination of fixed qualities, a determined character.... In one view personality is regarded as a fixed structure of recognisable qualities expressing a power of being"; another idea regards "personality as a flux of self-expressive or sensitive and responsive being.... But flux of nature and fixity of nature" — which some call character — "are two aspects of being neither of which, nor indeed both together, can be a definition of personality.... But besides this flux and this fixity there is also a third and occult element, the Person behind of whom the personality is a self-expression; the Person puts forward the personality as his role, character, *persona*, in the present act of his long drama of manifested existence. But the Person is larger than his personality, and it may happen that this inner largeness overflows into the surface formation; the result is a self-expression of being which can no longer be described by fixed qualities, normalities of mood, exact lineaments, or marked out by

[3] His initials, in the Tamil manner, by which he was widely known.

structural limits."[4]

The gospel of the Supermind which Sri Aurobindo brought to man envisages a new level of consciousness beyond Mind. When this level is attained it imposes a complete and radical reintegration of the human personality. Sri Aurobindo was not merely the exponent but the embodiment of the new, dynamic truth of the Supermind. While exploring and sounding the tremendous possibilities of human personality in his intense spiritual Sadhana, he has shown us that practically there are no limits to its expansion and ascent. It can reach in its growth what appears to man at present as a 'divine' status. It goes without saying that this attainment is not an easy task; there are conditions to be fulfilled for the transformation from the human to the divine.

The Gita in its chapters on the Vibhuti and the Avatar takes in general the same position. It shows that the present formula of our nature, and therefore the mental personality of man, is not final. A Vibhuti embodies in a human manifestation a certain divine quality and thus demonstrates the possibility of overcoming the limits of ordinary human personality. The Vibhuti — the embodiment of a divine quality or power, and the Avatar — the divine incarnation, are not to be looked upon as supraphysical miracles thrown at humanity without regard to the process of evolution; they are, in fact, indications of human possibility, a sign that points to the goal of evolution.

In his *Essays on the Gita*, Sri Aurobindo says about the Avatar: "He may, on the other hand, descend as an incarnation of divine life, the divine personality and power in its characteristic action, for a mission ostensibly social, ethical and political, as is represented in the story of Rama or Krishna; but always then this descent becomes in the soul of the race a permanent power for the inner living and the spiritual rebirth."[5]

[4] *The Life Divine*, Centenary Edition, pp. 994-$.

"He comes as the divine power and love which calls men to itself, so that they may take refuge in that and no longer in the insufficiency of their human wills and the strife of their human fear, wrath and passion, and liberated from all this unquiet and suffering may live in the calm and bliss of the Divine." [6]

"The Avatar comes to reveal the divine nature in man above this lower nature and to show what are the divine works, free, unegoistic, disinterested, impersonal, universal, full of the divine light, the divine power and the divine love. He comes as the divine personality which shall fill the consciousness of the human being and replace the limited egoistic personality, so that it shall be liberated out of ego into infinity and universality, out of birth into immortality."[7]

It is clear that Sri Aurobindo interpreted the traditional idea of the Vibhuti and the Avatar in terms of the evolutionary possibilities of man. But more directly he has worked out the idea of the 'gnostic individual' in his masterpiece *The Life Divine.* He says: "A supramental gnostic individual will be a spiritual Person, but not a personality in the sense of a pattern of being marked out by a settled combination of fixed qualities, a determined character; he cannot be that since he is a conscious expression of the universal and the transcendent." Describing the gnostic individual he says: "We feel ourselves in the presence of a light of consciousness, a potency, a sea of energy, can distinguish and describe its free waves of action and quality, but not fix itself; and yet there is an impression of personality, the presence of a powerful being, a strong, high or beautiful recognisable Someone, a Person, not a limited creature of Nature but a Self or Soul, a Purusha."[8]

---

[5] *Essays on the Gita*, Cent. Ed., p. 161.

[6] *Ibid*., p. 166.

[7] *Ibid*., p. 166.

[8] *The Life Divine*, Cent. Ed. pp. 994-5.

One feels that he was describing the feeling of some of us, his disciples, with regard to him in his inimitable way.

This transformation of the human personality into the Divine — perhaps even the mere connection of the human with the Divine — is probably regarded as a chimera by the modern mind. To the modern mind it would appear as the apotheosis of a human personality which is against its idea of equality of men. Its difficulty is partly due to the notion that the Divine is unlimited and illimitable while a 'personality', however high and grand, seems to demand imposition, or assumption, of limitation. In this connection Sri Aurobindo said during an evening talk that no human manifestation can be illimitable and unlimited, but the manifestation in the limited should reflect the unlimited, the Transcendent Beyond.

This possibility of the human touching and manifesting the Divine has been realised during the course of human history whenever a great spiritual Light has appeared on earth. One of the purposes of this book is to show how Sri Aurobindo himself reflected the unlimited Beyond in his own self.

Greatness is magnetic and in a sense contagious. Wherever manifested, greatness is claimed by humanity as something that reveals the possibility of the race. The highest utility of greatness is not merely to attract us but to inspire us to follow it and rise to our own highest spiritual stature. To the majority of men Truth remains abstract, impersonal and far unless it is seen and felt concretely in a human personality. A man never knows a truth actively except through a person and by embodying it in his own personality. Some glimpse of the Truth-Consciousness which Sri Aurobindo embodied may be caught in these Evening Talks.

II

Guru-griha-vāsa — staying in the home of the Guru — is a very old Indian ideal maintained by seekers through the ages. The

Aranyakas — the ancient teachings in the forest-groves — are perhaps the oldest records of the institution. It was not for education in the modern sense of the term that men went to live with the Guru; for the Guru is not a 'teacher'. The Guru is one who is 'enlightened', who is a seer, a Rishi, one who has the vision of and has lived the Truth. He has, thus, the knowledge of the goal of human life and has learnt true values in life by living the Truth. He can impart both these to the willing seeker. In ancient times seekers went to the Guru with many questions, difficulties and doubts but also with earnestness. Their questions were preliminary to the quest.

The Master, the Guru, set at rest the puzzled human mind by his illuminating answers, perhaps even more by his silent consciousness, so that it might be able to pursue unhampered the path of realisation of the Truth. Those ancient discourses answer the mind of man today even across the ages. They have rightly acquired — as everything of the past does — a certain sanctity. But sometimes that very reverence prevents men from properly evaluating, and living in, the present. This happens when the mind instead of seeking the Spirit looks at the form. For instance, it is not necessary for such discourses that they take place in forest-groves in order to be highly spiritual. Wherever the Master is, there is Light. And *guru-griha* — the house of the Master — can be his private dwelling place. So much was this feeling a part of Sri Aurobindo's nature and so particular was he to maintain the personal character of his work that during the first few years — after 1923 — he did not like his house to be called an 'Ashram', as the word had acquired the sense of a public institution to the modern mind. But there was no doubt that the flower of Divinity had blossomed in him; and disciples, like bees seeking honey, came to him. It is no exaggeration to say that these Evening Talks were to the small company of disciples what the Aranyakas were to the ancient seekers. Seeking the Light, they came to the dwelling place of their Guru, the greatest seer of the age, and found it their spiritual home

— the home of their parents, for the Mother, his companion in the great mission, had come. And these spiritual parents bestowed upon the disciples freely of their Light, their Consciousness, their Power and their Grace. The modern reader may find that the form of these discourses differs from those of the past but it was bound to be so for the simple reason that the times have changed and the problems that puzzle the modern mind are so different. Even though the disciples may be very imperfect representations of what he aimed at in them, still they are his creations. It is in order to repay, in however infinitesimal a degree, the debt which we owe to him that the effort is made to partake of the joy of his company — the Evening Talks — with a larger public.

III

EVENING SITTINGS

Sri Aurobindo was never a social man in the current sense of the term and definitely he was not a man of the crowd. This was due to his grave temperament, not to any feeling of superiority or to repulsion for men. At Baroda there was an Officers' Club which was patronised by the Maharajah and though Sri Aurobindo enrolled himself as a member he hardly went to the Club even on special occasions. He rather liked a small congenial circle of friends and spent most of his evenings with them whenever he was free and not occupied with his studies or other works. After Baroda when he went to Calcutta there was hardly any time in the storm and stress of revolutionary politics to permit him to lead a 'social life'. What little time he could spare from his incessant activities was spent in the house of Raja Subodh Mallick or at the Grey Street house. In the *Karmayogin* office he used to sit after the office hours till late chatting with a few persons or trying automatic writing. Strange dictations used to be received sometimes: one of them was the following: "Moni [Suresh Chakravarty] will bomb Sir Edward Grey when he will come as the Viceroy of India." In later years at

Pondicherry there used to be a joke that Sir Edward took such a fright at the prospect of Moni's bombing him that he never came to India!

After Sri Aurobindo had come to Pondicherry from Chandernagore, he entered upon an intense period of Sadhana and for a few months he refused to receive anyone. After a time he used to sit down to talk in the evening and on some days tried automatic writing. *Yogic Sadhan*, a small book, was the result. In 1913 Sri Aurobindo moved to Rue François Martin No. 41 where he used to receive visitors at fixed times. This was generally in the morning between 9 and 10.30.

But, over and above newcomers, some local people and the few inmates of the house used to have informal talks with Sri Aurobindo in the evening. In the beginning the inmates used to go out for playing football, and during their absence known local individuals would come in and wait for Sri Aurobindo. Afterwards regular meditations began at about 4 p.m. in which practically all the inmates participated. After the meditation all of the members and those who were permitted shared in the evening sitting. This was a very informal gathering depending entirely upon Sri Aurobindo's leisure.

When Sri Aurobindo and the Mother moved to No. 9 Rue de la Marine in 1922 the same routine of informal evening sittings after meditation continued. I came to Pondicherry for Sadhana in the beginning of 1923. I kept notes of the important talks I had with the four or five disciples who were already there. Besides, I used to take detailed notes of the Evening Talks which we all had with the Master. They were not intended by him to be noted down. I took them down because of the importance I felt about everything connected with him, no matter how insignificant to the outer view. I also felt that everything he did would acquire for those who would come to know his mission a very great significance.

As years passed the evening sittings went on changing their time

and often those disciples who came from outside for a temporary stay for Sadhana were allowed to join them. And, as the number of sadhaks practising the Yoga increased, the evening sittings also became more full, and the small verandah upstairs in the main building was found insufficient. Members of the household would gather every day at the fixed time with some sense of expectancy and start chatting in low tones. Sri Aurobindo used to come last and it was after his coming that the session would really commence.

He came dressed as usual in dhoti, part of which was used by him to cover the upper part of his body. Very rarely he came out with chaddar or shawl and then it was "in deference to the climate" as he sometimes put it. At times for minutes he would be gazing at the sky from a small opening at the top of the grass-curtains that covered the verandah upstairs in No. 9, Rue de la Marine. How much were these sittings dependent on him may be gathered from the fact that there were days when more than three-fourths of the time passed in complete silence without any outer suggestion from him, or there was only an abrupt "Yes" or "No" to all attempts at drawing him out in conversation. And even when he participated in the talk one always felt that his voice was that of one who does not let his whole being flow into his words; there was a reserve and what was left unsaid was perhaps more than what was spoken. What was spoken was what he felt necessary to speak.

Very often some news-item in the daily newspaper, town-gossip, or some interesting letter received either by him or by a disciple, or a question from one of the gathering, occasionally some remark or query from himself would set the ball rolling for the talk. The whole thing was so informal that one could never predict the turn the conversation would take. The whole house therefore was in a mood to enjoy the freshness and the delight of meeting the unexpected. There were peals of laughter and light talk, jokes and criticism which might be called personal, there was seriousness and earnestness in abundance.

These sittings, in fact, furnished Sri Aurobindo with an occasion to admit and feel the outer atmosphere and that of the group living with him. It brought to him the much-needed direct contact of the mental and vital make-up of the disciples, enabling him to act on the atmosphere in general and on the individual in particular. He could thus help to remould their mental make-up by removing the limitations of their minds and opinions, and correct temperamental tendencies and formations. Thus, these sittings contributed at least partly to the creation of an atmosphere amenable to the working of the Higher Consciousness. Far more important than the actual talk and its content was the personal contact, the influence of the Master, and the divine atmosphere he emanated; for through his outer personality it was the Divine Consciousness that he allowed to act. All along behind the outer manifestation that appeared human, there was the influence and presence of the Divine.

What was talked in the small group informally was not intended by Sri Aurobindo to be the independent expression of his views on the subjects, events or the persons discussed. Very often what he said was in answer to the spiritual need of the individual or of the collective atmosphere. It was like a spiritual remedy meant to produce certain spiritual results, not a philosophical or metaphysical pronouncement on questions, events or movements. The net result of some talks very often was to point out to the disciple the inherent incapacity of the human intellect and its secondary place in the search for the ultimate Reality.

But there were occasions when he did give his independent, personal views on some problems, on events or other subjects. Even then it was never an authoritarian pronouncement. Most often it appeared to be a logically worked out and almost inevitable conclusion expressed quite impersonally though with firm and sincere conviction. This impersonality was such a prominent trait of his personality! Even in such matters as dispatching a letter or a telegram it would not be a command from him to a disciple to carry

out the task. Most often during his usual passage to the dining room he would stop on the way, drop in on the company of four or five disciples and, holding out the letter or the telegram, would say in the most amiable and yet the most impersonal way: "I suppose this has to be sent." And it would be for someone in the group instantly to volunteer and take it. The expression he very often used was "It was done" or "It happened", not "I did."

From 1918 to 1922, we gathered at No. 41, Rue François Martin, called the Guest House, upstairs, on a broad verandah into which four rooms opened and whose main piece of furniture was a small table 3' x 1½' covered with a blue cotton cloth. That is where Sri Aurobindo used to sit in a hard wooden chair behind the table with a few chairs in front for the visitors or for the disciples.

From 1922 to 1926, No. 9, Rue de la Marine, where he and the Mother had shifted, was the place where the sittings were held. There, also upstairs, was a less broad verandah than at the Guest House, a little bigger table in front of the central door out of three, and a broad Japanese chair, the table covered with a better cloth than the one in the Guest House, a small flower vase, an ash-tray, a block calendar indicating the date and an ordinary time-piece, and a number of chairs in front in a line. The evening sittings used to be after meditation at 4 or 4.30 p.m. After 24 November 1926, the sittings began to get later and later, till the limit of 1 o'clock at night was reached. Then the curtain fell. Sri Aurobindo retired completely after December 1926, and the evening sittings came to a close.

On 8 February 1927, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother moved to No. 28, Rue François Martin, a house on the north-east of the same block as No. 9, Rue de la Marine.

♏

Then, on 23 November 1938, I got up at 2 o'clock to prepare hot water for the Mother's early bath because the 24th was Darshan day. Between 2.20 and 2.30 the Mother rang the bell. I ran up the

staircase to be told about an accident that had happened to Sri Aurobindo's thigh and to be asked to fetch the doctor. This accident brought about a change in his complete retirement, and rendered him available to those who had to attend on him. This opened out a long period of 12 years during which his retirement was modified owing to circumstances, inner and outer, that made it possible for him to have direct physical contacts with the world outside.

The long period of the Second World War with all its vicissitudes passed through these years. It was a priceless experience to see how he devoted his energies to the task of saving humanity from the threatened reign of Nazism. It was a practical lesson of solid work done for humanity without any thought of return or reward, without even letting humanity know what he was doing for it! Thus he lived the Divine and showed us how the Divine cares for the world, how He comes down and works for man. I shall never forget how he who was at one time — in his own words — "not merely a non-co-operator but an enemy of British Imperialism" bestowed such anxious care on the health of Churchill, listening carefully to the health-bulletins! It was the work of the Divine, it was the Divine's work for the world.

There were no formal evening sittings during these years, but what appeared to me important in our informal talks was recorded and has been incorporated in this book.

MEETING THE MASTER

I

I went out from Pondicherry in 1947 when India was on the eve of securing her partitioned freedom. On my return-journey in the month of July 1947, I became conscious of the fact that it was my return to a place where I had passed nearly twenty-five years at a stretch. The memory of my first visit in 1918 awoke in me all the old impressions vividly. I saw then that even at that early period Sri Aurobindo had been for me the embodiment of the Supreme Consciousness. I began to search mentally for the exact time-moment when I had come to know him. Travelling far into the past I found it was in 1914 when I read a notice in the *Bombay Chronicle* about the publication of a monthly magazine — the *Arya* — from Pondicherry by Sri Aurobindo. I hastened to register my name in advance. In those days of political storms, to avoid the suspicion of the college authorities and the police, I had ordered the magazine to be delivered to an address outside the college. Sri Aurobindo then appeared to me to be the personification of the ideal of the life divine which he so ably put before humanity in the *Arya.*

But the question: "Why did I order the *Arya*?" remained. On trying to find an answer I found that I had known him before the appearance of the *Arya.*

The Congress broke up at Surat in 1907. Sri Aurobindo had played a prominent part in that historic session. From Surat he came to Baroda, and at Vankaner Theatre and at Prof. Manik Rao's old gymnasium in Dandia Bazar he delivered several speeches which not only took the audience by storm but changed entirely the course of many lives. I also heard him without understanding everything that was spoken. But ever since I had seen him I had got the constant feeling that he was one known to me, and so my mind could not fix the exact time-moment when I knew him. It is certain

that the connection seemed to begin with the great tidal wave of the national movement in the political life of India; but I think it was only the apparent beginning. The years between 1903 and 1910 were those of unprecedented awakening and revolution. The generations that followed also witnessed two or three powerful floods of the national movement. But the very first onrush of the newly awakened national consciousness of India was unique. That tidal wave in its initial onrush defined the goal of India's political ideal — an independent republic. Alternating movements of ebb and flow in the national movement followed till in 1947 the goal was reached. The lives of leaders and workers, who rode, willingly and with delight on the dangerous crest of the tidal wave, underwent great transformations. Our small group in Gujarat got its goal fixed — the winning of undiluted freedom for India.

All the energies of the leaders were taken up by the freedom movement. Only a few among them attempted to see beyond the horizon of political freedom some ideal of human perfection; for, after all, freedom is not the ultimate goal but a condition for the expression of the cultural Spirit of India. In Swami Shraddhananda, Pandit Madanmohan Malavia, Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi — to name some leaders — we see the double aspect of the inspiration. Among all the visions of perfection of the human spirit on earth, I found the synthetic and integral vision of Sri Aurobindo the most rational and the most satisfying. It meets the need of the individual and collective life of man today. It is the international form of the fundamental elements of Indian culture. It is, Dr. S. K. Maitra says, the message which holds out hope in a world of despair.

This aspect of Sri Aurobindo's vision attracted me as much as the natural affinity which I had felt on seeing him. I found on making a serious study of the *Arya* that it led me to very rational conclusions with regard to the solutions of the deepest problems of life. I opened correspondence with him and in 1916, with his permission, began to translate the *Arya* into Gujarati.

But, though I had seen him from a distance and felt an unaccountable familiarity with him, still I had not yet met him personally. When the question of putting into execution the revolutionary plan which Sri Aurobindo had given to my brother, the late C. B. Purani, at Baroda in 1907, arose, I thought it better to obtain Sri Aurobindo's consent to it. Barindra, his brother, had given the formula for preparing bombs to my brother, and I was also very impatient to begin the work. But still we thought it necessary to consult the great leader who had given us the inspiration, as the lives of many young men were involved in the plan.

I had an introduction to Sj. V. V. S. Aiyar who was then staying at Pondicherry. It was in December 1918 that I reached Pondicherry. I did not stay long with Mr. Aiyar. I took up my bundle of books — mainly the *Arya* — and went to No. 41, Rue François Martin, the *Arya* office, which was also Sri Aurobindo's residence. The house looked a little queer, — on the right side, as one entered, were a few plantain trees and by their side a heap of broken tiles. On the left, at the edge of the open courtyard, four doors giving entrance to four rooms were seen. The verandah outside was wide. It was about eight in the morning. The time for meeting Sri Aurobindo was fixed at three o'clock in the afternoon. I waited all the time in the house, occasionally chatting with the two inmates who were there.

ॐ

Sri Aurobindo was sitting in a wooden chair behind a small table covered with an indigo-blue cloth in the verandah upstairs when I went up to meet him. I felt a spiritual light surrounding his face. His look was penetrating. He had known me by my correspondence. I reminded him about my brother having met him at Baroda; he had not forgotten him. Then I informed him that our group was now ready to start revolutionary activity. It had taken us about eleven years to get organised.

Sri Aurobindo remained silent for some time. Then he put me questions about my sadhana. I described my efforts and added: "Sadhana is all right, but it is difficult to concentrate on it so long as India is not free."

"Perhaps it may not be necessary to resort to revolutionary activity to free India," he said.

"But without that how is the British Government to go from India?" I asked him.

"That is another question; but if India can be free without revolutionary activity, why should you execute the plan? It is better to concentrate on Yoga," he replied.

"But India is a land that has Sadhana in its blood. When India is free, I believe, thousands will devote themselves to Yoga. But in the world of today who will listen to the truth from, or spirituality of, slaves ?" I asked him.

He replied: "India has already decided to win freedom and so there will certainly be found leaders and men to work for that goal. But all are not called to Yoga. So, when you have the call, is it not better to concentrate upon it? If you want to carry out the revolutionary programme you are free to do it, but I cannot give my consent to it."

"But it was you who gave us the inspiration and the start for revolutionary activity. Why do you now refuse to give your consent to its execution ?" I asked.

"Because I have done the work and I know its difficulties. Young men come forward to join the movement, driven by idealism and enthusiasm. But these elements do not last long. It becomes very difficult to observe and extract discipline. Small groups begin to form within the organisation, rivalries grow between groups and even between individuals. There is competition for leadership. The agents of the Government generally manage to join these organisations from the very beginning. And so the organisations are

unable to act effectively. Sometimes they sink so low as to quarrel even for money," he said calmly.

"But even supposing that I grant sadhana to be of greater importance, and even intellectually understand that I should concentrate upon it, my difficulty is that I feel intensely that I must do something for the freedom of India. I have been unable to sleep soundly for the last two years and a half. I can remain quiet if I make a very strong effort. But the concentration of my whole being turns towards India's freedom. It is difficult for me to sleep till that is secured."

Sri Aurobindo remained silent for two or three minutes. It was a long pause. Then he said: "Suppose an assurance is given to you that India will be free?"

"Who can give such an assurance?" I could feel the echo of doubt and challenge in my own question.

Again he remained silent for three or four minutes. Then he looked at me and added: "Suppose I give you the assurance?"

I paused for a moment, considered the question with myself and said: "If you give the assurance, I can accept it."

"Then I give you the assurance that India will be free," he said in a serious tone.

My work was over — the purpose of my visit to Pondicherry was served. My personal question and the problem of our group was solved! I then conveyed to him the message of Sj. K, G. Deshpande from Baroda. I told him that financial help could be arranged from Baroda, if necessary, to which he replied, "At present what is required comes from Bengal, especially from Chandernagore. So there is no need."

When the talk turned to Prof. D. L. Purohit of Baroda, Sri Aurobindo recounted the incident of his visit to Pondicherry where he had come to inquire into the relation between the Church and the State. He had paid a courtesy call on Sri Aurobindo as he had

known him at Baroda. This had resulted in his resignation from Baroda State service on account of the pressure of the British Residency. I conveyed to Sri Aurobindo the good news that after his resignation Mr. Purohit had started practice as a lawyer and was quite successful, earning more than the pay he had been getting as a professor.

It was time for me to leave. The question of Indian freedom again arose in my mind, and at the time of taking leave, after I had got up to depart, I could not repress the question — it was a question of my very life for me: "Are you quite sure that India will be free?"

I did not, at that time, realise the full import of my query. I wanted a guarantee, and though the assurance was given my doubts had not completely disappeared.

Sri Aurobindo became very serious. The Yogi in him came forward, his gaze was fixed at the sky that could be seen beyond the window. Then he looked at me and putting his fist on the table he said:

"You can take it from me, it is as certain as the rising of the sun tomorrow. The decree has already gone forth — it may not be long in coming."

I bowed down to him. That day I was able to sleep soundly in the train after more than two years. And in my mind was fixed for ever the picture of that scene: the two of us standing near the small table, my earnest question, that upward gaze, and that quiet and firm voice with power in it to shake the world, that firm fist planted on the table — the symbol of self-confidence of the divine Truth. There may be rank Kaliyuga, the Iron Age, in the whole world but it is the great good fortune of India that she has sons who know the Truth and have the unshakable faith in it, and can risk their lives for its sake. In this significant fact is contained the divine destiny of India and of the world.

After meeting Sri Aurobindo I was quite relieved of the great strain that was upon me. Now that I felt Indian freedom to be a certainty, I could participate in public movements with equanimity and with a truer spiritual attitude. I got some experiences also which confirmed my faith in Sri Aurobindo's path. I got the confident faith in a divine Power that is beyond time and space and that can and does work in the world. I came to know that any man with a sincere aspiration for it can come in contact with that Power.

There were people who thought that Sri Aurobindo had retired from life, that he did not take any interest in the world and its affairs. These ideas never troubled me. On the contrary, I felt that his work was of tremendous significance for humanity and its future. In fact, the dynamic aspect of his spirituality, his insistence on life as a field for the manifestation of the Spirit, and his great synthesis added to the attraction I had already felt. To me he appeared as the spiritual Sun in modern times shedding his light on mankind from the height of his consciousness, and Pondicherry where he lived was a place of pilgrimage.

II

The second time I met Sri Aurobindo was in March 1921, when there was a greater familiarity. Having come for a short stay, I remained eleven days on Sri Aurobindo's asking me to prolong my stay. During my journey from Madras to Pondicherry I was enchanted by the natural scenery — the vast stretches of green paddy fields. But Pondicherry as a city was lethargic, with a colonial atmosphere — an exhibition of the worst elements of European and Indian culture. The market was dirty and stinking and the people had no idea of sanitation. The sea-beach was made filthy by them. Smuggling was the main business.

But the greatest surprise of my visit in 1921 was the 'darshan' of Sri Aurobindo. During the interval of two years his body had

undergone a transformation which could only be described as miraculous. In 1918 the colour of the body was like that of an ordinary Bengali — rather dark — though there was a lustre on the face and the gaze was penetrating. This time on going upstairs to see him (in the same house) I found his cheeks wore an apple-pink colour and the whole body glowed with a soft creamy white light. So great and unexpected was the change that I could not help exclaiming: "What has happened to you?"

Instead of giving a direct reply he parried the question, as I had grown a beard: "And what has happened to you?"

But afterwards in the course of the conversation he explained to me that when the Higher Consciousness, after descending to the mental level, comes down to the vital and even below the vital, then a transformation takes place in the nervous and even in the physical being. He asked me to join the meditation in the afternoon and also the evening sittings.

This time I saw the Mother for the first time. She was standing near the staircase when Sri Aurobindo was going upstairs after lunch. Such unearthly beauty I had never seen — she appeared to be about twenty years old whereas she was more than forty.

I found the atmosphere of the house tense. The Mother and Datta, i.e. Miss Hodgson, had come to stay in No. 41, Rue François Martin. The house had undergone a great change. There was a clean garden in the open courtyard, every room had simple and decent furniture, — a mat, a chair and a small table. There was an air of tidiness and order. This was, no doubt, the effect of the Mother's presence. But yet the atmosphere was tense because Sri Aurobindo and the Mother were engaged in fighting with forces of the vital plane.

Only a few days before my arrival a dismissed cook had managed to get stones hurled into Sri Aurobindo's house through the agency of a Mohammedan occultist. This was the topic of

excited talk when I was at Pondicherry. Upendranath Banerjee, who hardly believed in the possibility of such occult phenomena, had gone to the terrace with a lantern and a lathi to find the culprit. I heard the whole story from Upen himself. The stone-throwing ended when the Mother took the matter in hand and removed the servant-boy, who was the medium, to another house. (The account of this is already given in my *The Life of Sri Aurobindo*.)

The Prabartak Sangh was started at Chandernagore by Motilal Roy and others under the inspiration of Sri Aurobindo. In the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo life is accepted as the field for the manifestation of the Divine. Its main aim is not liberation merely but the manifestation of divine perfection. In his vision not only the individual but the collectivity also is a term of the Divine. Acceptance of life includes the collective life. There is a deeper reason for accepting life. In his vision of the Reality Sri Aurobindo shows the rationality and the inevitability of an ascent by man to a higher consciousness than Mind. This ascent to the Higher Consciousness must lead to its descent in man. If the new element, the Supermind, is to become a permanent part of the earth-consciousness, then not only should it descend into the lowest plane of physical consciousness — the subconscient — but it must become a part of the collective consciousness on earth.

I asked him many questions about the organisation of a collective life based on spiritual aspiration.

On the last day of my stay of eleven days I met Sri Aurobindo between three and four in the afternoon. The main topic was Sadhana.When I got up to take leave I asked him: "What are you waiting for?" I put the question because it was clear to me that he had been constantly living in the Higher Consciousness.

"It is true," he said, "that the Divine Consciousness has descended but it has not yet descended into the physical being. So long as that is not done the work cannot be said to be accomplished."

I bowed down to him. When I got up to look at his face, I found he had already gone to the entrance of his room and, through the one door, I saw him turning his face towards me with a smile. I felt a great elation when I boarded the train: for, here was a guide who had already attained the Divine Consciousness, was conscious about it, and yet whose detachment and discrimination were so perfect, whose sincerity so profound, that he knew what had still to be attained and could go on unobtrusively doing his hard work for mankind. External forms had a secondary place in his scale of values. In an effort so great is embodied some divine inspiration; to be called to such an ideal was itself the greatest good fortune.

The freedom of India, about which he had assured me, came, and I was fortunate to live to see it arrive on his own auspicious birthday, the 15th of August 1947.I had been out and now it was to Pondicherry that I was returning.

I had lived there for nearly a generation but had never felt the Pondicherry Ashram as something fixed and unchanging. I realised this most strongly on the day I was returning to it. Pondicherry has always been to me the symbol of a great experiment, of a divine ideal. It is marching every hour towards the ultimate goal of mans upward ascent to the Divine. Not a city but a spiritual laboratory, a collective being with a daily changing horizon yet pursuing a fixed distant objective, a place fixed to the outer view but constantly moving — Pondicherry to me is always like the Arab's tent.

III

NOVEMBER OR DECEMBER 1920

Interview with a disciple

Disciple: What would be the nature of the spiritual commune?

Sri Aurobindo: It would be composed of those who intend to do Sadhana.

Disciple: Would it be established on economics as the central basis?

Sri Aurobindo: No, it would not be based merely on economics.

Disciple: Who would be admitted into the commune and what would be the method of selection?

Sri Aurobindo: Those who have taken to Sadhana; they are already united though unconsciously.

Disciple: Would it be necessary for members to have some intellectual work in the commune?

Sri Aurobindo: There must be three to four hours intellectual work every day. The members must be able to follow what the Yoga is and its processes.

Disciple: What would be the place of personal demand in such a commune?

Sri Aurobindo: Personal demand must not remain; everything would be intended for all. But before one joins it one must make sure of his spiritual aspiration.

Disciple: Will the collective organisation be economically self-sufficient?

Sri Aurobindo: No. It will have to produce more things because all its needs cannot be supplied by itself. It will have, therefore, to keep connection with the capitalist world. Agriculture is the

mainstay. The community must try to be self-reliant with regard to food.

♏

NOVEMBER OR DECEMBER 1920

Sarala Devi Chowdhurani came to Pondicherry to meet Sri Aurobindo. It was evident she wanted to ascertain his future programme and his views on current politics. She met him for two days.

As she came up to meet him at the time fixed, 4.30 p.m., Sri Aurobindo got up from his chair to greet her. Both greeted each other with folded hands. After formal exchanges Sarala Devi began:

Sarala Devi: Is it true that you are against the non-cooperation movement?

Sri Aurobindo: I am not against it; the train has arrived, it must be allowed to run its own course. The only thing I feel is that there is great need of solidifying the national will for freedom into stern action.

Sarala Devi: Non-cooperation has declared war against imperialism.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, it has, but I am afraid it is done without proper ammunition, and mobilisation and organisation of the available forces.

Sarala Devi: Why don't you come out and try to run your own train?

Sri Aurobindo: I must first prepare the rails and lay them down, then only can I get the train to arrive.

Sarala Devi: But you must do something, should you not?

Sri Aurobindo: As for myself, I have a personal programme. But if I was in politics, even then I would have taken another stand. I would first be sure of my ground before I fought the government.

Sarala Devi: Don't you think that sufficient work has been done in the country to start the fight?

Sri Aurobindo: Until now only waves of emotion and a certain all-round awakening have come. But the force which could stand the strain when the Government would put forth its force in full vigour is still not there.

What is needed is more organisation of the national will. It is no use emotional waves rising and spreading, then going down. Our leaders need not go on lecturing. What we should do is to organise local committees of action throughout the country to carry out any mandate of the central organisation. These local leaders must stay among the people.

Sarala Devi: But I find many people ridicule non-cooperation. Rabi Babu[9] is choked by it. What is your frank personal opinion?

Sri Aurobindo: We have qualified sympathy with the movement; sympathy is there because we have the same objective; it is qualified because we feel that the basis is not sound. The Punjab martial law and atrocities, the Khilafat are there, and non-cooperation is based on those wrongs. Some students from Madras came here the other day and told me they wanted to non-cooperate because the Government was unjust. Asked whether they would put up with a just British Government they could not reply.

India must want freedom because of herself, because of her own Spirit. I would very much like India to find her own Swaraj and then, like Ireland, to work out her salvation even with violence — preferably without violence. Our basis must be broader than that of mere opposition to the British Government. All the time our eyes are turned to the British and their actions. We must look to

[9] Rabindranath Tagore.

ourselves irrespective of them and having found our own nationhood make it free.

♈

9 APRIL 1923

A visitor from Madras to Pondicherry came in connection with non-cooperation work and met Sri Aurobindo.

Question: Dr. Bhagwandas and some others are trying to spiritualise politics — particularly the western institutions in our politics, and there is the village organisation work also. What is your opinion in this matter?

Sri Aurobindo: These are two things which must be kept apart. There are first those who want to work for political freedom and they fix that as their final goal. Secondly, there are those who want to organise the future life of the community in India.

These two require different kinds of organisations and they must be allowed to work with the utmost rapidity. It goes without saying that without organisation there can be no success in any work. But the political worker's path is straight. He need not go in for constructive work. He has to organise in the village something like the peasant organisations and associations in Ireland. When they are sufficiently well-organised then they can throw their weight into politics. The second path is much harder and longer and the workers method also will be different. If he succeeds he is one of those who win the highest victory.

Of late, in some quarters, too much weight is being put upon village work. I know that in India it is a very important work to do. But I do not like people trying to picture future India as a mass of villages only. The village has a lot of life-problems and the villagers must be rescued from their living death. But they cannot be leaders

of thought.

Question: Don't you think that some kind of political organisation and work is necessary in the villages and that the village also can be a centre of culture and creative activity?

Sri Aurobindo: Organisation and work in villages are certainly necessary, but I doubt very much whether the village could be a creative centre. At least in the past it was not, so far as we can see. In the past there were village communities but they do not seem to have been creative. The reason is that the man in the village has his view of life bound up with a small portion of land and things so that he cannot easily breathe that liberal and free air which is necessary for great creation. That is why leaders always came from the cities even in ancient times. I do not think that the villages in India, or anywhere in the world, are able to rule even in democracy. For creation a certain leisure and mental development are wanted.

Question: Do you think that in Russia what they have attempted is real democracy?

Sri Aurobindo: In Europe they have always tried for democracy. Real democracy has always failed, and failed because it is against human nature. There are certain men who are bound to govern. One must be prepared to face facts. Even in the democracies those men manage to rule, and one knows only too well the villagers do not. Only, those people govern in their name, and it sometimes makes them more free and reckless. In Russia — one does not know the exact situation — the attempt was for creating real rule of the people, i.e. of the village. You see in what it has ended? It has established again an oligarchy of the Lenin-party. One may even ask: What has Russia created? It has tried to destroy capital and thus tried to destroy and perhaps succeeded in destroying city life. It is trying mechanically to equalise men. But it is not a success. The Western social life rests on interests and rights. It depends upon the vitalistic existence of man which is largely governed by his rational mind helped by scientific inventions. Reason gives man the rigid

methods of classification and mental construction and theory to justify his interests and rights, and science gives him the required efficiency, force and power. Thus he is sure of his goal. But one may say that, though organised and effective, European life is not organic. The view that it takes of man is a very imperfect view, and the ideal it sets before man an incomplete ideal. That is why you find there class-war and struggle for rights governed by the rational intellect. European life is very powerful because it can put the whole force of its life at once in operation by a coordination of all its members. In old times the ideal was different. They — the ancients — based their society on the structure of religion. I do not mean narrow religion but the highest law of our being. The whole social fabric was built up to fulfil that purpose. There was no talk in those days of individual liberty in the present sense of the term. But there was absolute communal liberty. Every community was completely free to develop its own Dharma, — the law of its being. Even the selection of the line was a matter of free choice for the individual.

I do not believe that because a man is governed by another man, or one class by another class, there is always oppression; for instance, the Brahmins never ruled but they were never oppressed by others, rather they oppressed other people. The government becomes useless and bad when one class or one nation keeps another down and governs it for its own benefit and does not allow the class or nation to follow its own Dharma.

In ancient times each community had its own Dharma and within itself it was independent. Every village, every city had its own organisation quite free from all political control and within that every individual was free — free to change and take up another line for his development. But all this was not put into a definite political unit. There were, of course, attempts at that kind of expression of life but they were only partially successful. The whole community in India was a very big one and the community-culture based on Dharma was not thrown into a kind of organisation which

would resist external aggression; and ultimately we were brought to the present stage.

Now the problem is how to organise the future life of the country. I myself am a communist in a certain sense but I cannot agree with the Russian method. One may ask: After all what has Russia created? Even among our present workers in India there is a lack of that definite idea as to what they are about and what kind of thing they want. That is the reason why men like Dr. Bhagwandas propose some mental constructions like asking men to go in for politics after 50 years of age and so on. That does not seem to me to be the correct method, and I believe whoever pursues it will encounter complete failure.

Question: Anything would be better than the present condition.

Sri Aurobindo: That is of course the common ground of agreement.

♓

11 APRIL 1923

Sri Aurobindo today met K. Rajangam from Madras. Rajangam asked him to give him the Yoga.

Sri Aurobindo: This is a very difficult path and therefore demands complete surrender and one-pointed concentration. One must be after the Truth alone. One has to be prepared to leave ideals of altruism, patriotism and even the aspiration for personal liberation and follow the Yoga for the sake of the Divine alone. Aspiration must be firm but it must not be only an intellectual aspiration; it must be of the inmost soul. It, then, means a call from Above. One has to take an irrevocable decision before he begins the Yoga. Such a decision may take time to arrive but it is better to wait till then.

Disciple: I have decided to take up the Yoga.

Sri Aurobindo: There are so many difficulties in this path — this Yoga is not meant for all. At one time I had the idea that this Yoga is for humanity, but now the idea is changed. This Yoga is for the Divine, for God. Man has first to attain the Truth-Consciousness and leave the salvation of mankind to that Consciousness. This does not mean that one has to abandon Life in this Yoga. My mission in life is to bring down the Supermind into Mind, Life and Body. Formerly I did not care if the sadhak accepted other influences, but now I have decided to take only those who will admit the influence of this Yoga exclusively.

Disciple: What should be the sadhaks attitude with regard to physical illness?

Sri Aurobindo: He must first of all remain completely detached in the vital being and in the mind. The illness is the result of the working of the forces of Nature. He must use his will to reject the illness and ones will must be used as a representative of the Divine Will. When the Divine Will descends into the Adhara then it works no longer indirectly through the sadhak's will but directly and removes the illness. When the psychic being awakens then it is able to perceive the influence of the disease even before it enters the body. Not only does one perceive it, but one knows which organ is going to be attacked and one can keep off the attack with the help of the Higher Power.

♈

28 APRIL 1923

Sri Aurobindo generally used to see his disciples and visitors from outside, who came with the express purpose of seeing him, between 9 and 11 in the morning after he had a glance at the daily paper — *The Hindu*. These were very informal interviews and often intimate in the sense that the disciple would relate his experiences and

difficulties, and visitors from outside generally sought his advice on spiritual matters or guidance in some public activity.

One such interview is given here to illustrate how he dealt with the questions of Sadhana.

Disciple: I have, at present, a very strong impulse to realise the infinite Transcendent Shakti. I want to know whether it is safer to leave the sadhana to the Universal or to the Divine?

Sri Aurobindo: The Transcendent and the Universal powers are not always exclusive of each other; they are almost mutual: when the Transcendent is realised in Mind it is the Universal. One has to have that realisation also.

Disciple: What is the distinction between the two?

Sri Aurobindo: The Universal is full of all sorts of things, — true as well as false, good as well as bad, both divine and undivine. One has to get the knowledge and distinguish between them. It is not safe to open oneself to the Universal before one has the power of discrimination, because all kinds of ideas, forces, impulses, even *rākshasic* and *paishāchic* rush into him. There are schools of Yoga that consider this condition as 'freedom' or Mukti and they also take pleasure in the 'Universal manifestation', as they call it. But that is not perfection. Perfection only comes when the Transcendental Power manifests itself in human life, when the Infinite manifests itself in the finite.

Disciple: Cannot those who attain the Universal manifest perfection?

Sri Aurobindo: Generally, these are men who want to escape into the Universal — that is, into the Infinite, — the Sachchidananda, — on the mental plane. The Universal, as I told you, is full of all kinds of things, good and bad. The sadhaks, who enter into it and look upon it as their goal, accept whatever comes from it and, sometimes, behave in life with supreme indifference to

morality. But their being is not transformed. Among our known sadhaks, K opened himself to the Universal, could not distinguish, or rather refused to distinguish and at the end went mad. Or take the case of L, an outsider, who was trying to remain in the Universal consciousness with the vital being full of all kinds of impurities. That is not perfection.

When the Divine Power — the Supramental Shakti — works, She establishes harmony between the various instruments of nature and also harmony in the whole of our life. R and people like him feel that such a harmonisation of the being is a limitation. But it is not a limitation — because that action is in keeping with the truth of our being and our becoming.

Disciple: Is the Transcendent Power the same as the Supramental Power ?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, when that Power awakens, one knows not only the truth of being but also that of manifestation. There is inherent harmony on that plane between Truth-knowledge and Truth-action.

Disciple: Manifestation may mean limitation. Is that so?

Sri Aurobindo: No human manifestation can be illimitable or unlimited. But the manifestation in the limited should reflect the Transcendent Power. Human manifestation has a truth behind it and the Supermind shows the truth to be manifested. It is, really speaking, the clue to perfection.

Disciple: I feel a sense of pressure when the Power descends, particularly in the head.

Sri Aurobindo: One must get rid of the sense of pressure. The head indicates the seat of mind and gradually the Power should be made to descend below. When it descends below then it is not felt as pressure but as power which nothing can destroy. The whole being, down to the cells of the body, has to be prepared to receive the Power when it descends.

8 AUGUST 1923

Velji Thakersi Shah of Bidada, Cutch, met Sri Aurobindo.

V: I am going back to my place and will try to practise the Yoga there. I want to know whether I ought to cut myself away from all public activity.

Sri Aurobindo: There is no general rule that all who practise Yoga should give up all external work. Do you think that the work would stop if you gave it up?

V: There are one or two friends and co-workers to whom I can entrust the work; but even then it would require two or three hours of my attention.

Sri Aurobindo: Well, there are two or three considerations. First of all the necessity of giving up work depends on the demand from within. In the process of Sadhana there comes a stage when even two hours' attention to work is felt as a disturbance; then that work has to be given up. Or, if one finds that it is not the work that one has to do, then one has to give it up. So long as such an intense state of Sadhana does not come there is no harm in continuing the work.

V: I have started an organisation for the spread of our literature in my part of the country. What is your advice with regard to it?

Sri Aurobindo: I am neither for it nor against it in the intellectual sense. In this Yoga, external action is not to be abandoned. Sometimes action has to be done.

But ordinarily, we have not to do philanthropic work from the same motives. Philanthropy has an egoistic motive, however high it may be. We have to look beyond. For instance, we need not start schools for the Depressed Classes in order to serve humanity. We have to work as a sacrifice to God and we have therefore to go beyond mental ideals and constructions. When men begin work

with these mental or ethical motives, they find them to be true and therefore they are not willing to leave them behind and go beyond. We have to take up the work from the yogic point of view. For example, it is necessary to spread our literature because it spreads the new thought. Some men may receive it correctly and some incorrectly. A movement is set up on the universal mental plane. So also in social work the whole frame is shaken by the new thought and in-as-much as it moves men out of the old groove it is useful. But we have to act from the inner motives.

9

9 AUGUST 1923

Gokuldas of Cutch met Sri Aurobindo.

G: How to do action without desire? How can one be free from action and egoism?

Sri Aurobindo: The word 'egoism' is used in a very limited sense in English, — it means anything for the self. That which is not done for the self is regarded as unegoistic. But that is not so in Yoga. One can do all unselfish actions and have full egoism in him. He will have the egoism of the doer. Nishkama Karma means first desirelessness. You have to first establish that condition in which good or bad desires are absent. You must realise that it is the Power of God, His Shakti, that does the work in reality. All work, good and bad, in you and in the world, is Her work.

G: If a man takes up that attitude he may go on indiscriminately doing good or bad actions and say that God is doing them.

Sri Aurobindo: He may say so but he will get the return in proportion to the sense of egoism he puts into it.

G: What about the actions done in the past?

Sri Aurobindo: They are also in the hands of the Shakti. She knows what fruit to give and what not. When that kind of desirelessness is established you have to go on offering all your actions as a sacrifice to God. You must realise that it is the Shakti that does the work in yourself and She offers the same as a sacrifice to the Lord. The more desirelessness in the action, the purer the offering.

The action and the fruit of action both belong to God, — not to us. There should be no insistence on the fruit of good or unselfish action. When this is done then everything becomes easy.

G: How will a man act when he has no impulse of desire?

Sri Aurobindo: When you have realised desirelessness then there will be no impulse of either good or bad desire in yourself. Then there will be an impulsion from the Shakti and She takes up the work. Slowly the whole of your being opens and everything comes from Above. We merely become the instrument.

G: But how to distinguish between the work that the Shakti impels and that which is prompted by our lower self?

Sri Aurobindo: In order to distinguish the work intended by the Shakti and that dictated by the lower nature you have to be very careful. You must develop the power of looking within. When you look within you must first realise yourself as the Purusha, that is to say, the being quite separate from the movements of Prakriti, Nature, going on in the Prana (the vital parts), the Chitta, the Mind etc. Any movement that arises in Prakriti has to be rejected and anything that comes from Above has to be accepted. Not only must you separate yourself, but the Purusha must become the calm and passive witness. Thus there will be a portion in yourself which will be quiet, unaffected by anything in Prakriti. The calm of the Sakshi, witness, then extends to the nature and then nature remains quite unmoved by any disturbance. You can not merely remain unmoved

but also, as Anumanta, give the sanction to certain movements of nature and withhold it from others.

G: Is this the Yoga? No Asanas, no Pranayama!

Sri Aurobindo: It is not so simple as it appears. If there is sincerity in the offering then the help comes from Above. You must also have persistence.

G: It might require the learning which, I am afraid, I have not got.

Sri Aurobindo: Learning is not indispensable. The Yoga is done by the Shakti only. You do not know it because you are not aware of the higher movement. You have only to keep the attitude described and be sincere in the offering.

♍

28 SEPTEMBER 1923

Disciple: What is the nature of realisation in this Yoga?

Sri Aurobindo: In this Yoga we want to bring down the Truth-Consciousness into the whole being — no part of the being left out. This can be done by the Higher Power itself. What you have to do is to open yourself to it.

Disciple: As the Higher Power is there why does it not work in all men — consciously?

Sri Aurobindo: Because man, at present, is shut up in his mental being, his vital nature and physical consciousness and their limitations. You have to open yourself. By an opening I mean an aspiration in the heart for the coming down of the Power that is above, and a will in the Mind, or above the Mind, open to it.

The first thing this working of the Higher Power does is to establish Shanti, peace, in all the parts of the being and an opening

above. This peace is not mere mental Shanti, it is hill of power and, whatever action takes place in it, Samata, equality, is its basis, and the Shanti and Samata are never disturbed. What comes from above is peace, power and joy. It also brings about changes in various parts of our nature so that they can bear the pressure of the Higher Power.

Knowledge also progressively develops showing all in our being that is to be thrown out and what is to be retained. In fact, knowledge and guidance both come and you have constantly to consent to the guidance. The progress may be more in one direction than in another. But it is the Higher Power that works. The rest is a matter of experience and the movement of the Shakti.

23 DECEMBER 1923

Prof. R. B. Athavale met Sri Aurobindo.

Sri Aurobindo: What is your idea of Yoga?
Athavale: I have come to learn that from you.

Sri Aurobindo: That is not possible. How can you undertake to go in for it if you have no idea about it?

Athavale: I need the peace of mind which would be the first result of this Yoga. Secondly, I want to know what I should do in my life. I have read *The Yoga and Its Objects* and I would like to attain the ideal set forth in it.

Sri Aurobindo: Peace, of course, is the first condition of any Yoga and it must not be only mental peace. It must be deeper still, it must pervade all the parts of the being and it must descend from Above.

What is your idea of Kartavyam Karma?

Athavale: It is my duty in life.

Sri Aurobindo: Kartavyam Karma does not mean duty. Duty is a western notion. It is a wrong interpretation of the text of the Gita. It means: that which should be done, that which is ordained.

It is possible to know the Kartavyam Karma in that sense, if one can rise to something beyond Mind. You spoke of *The Yoga and Its Objects*. It was written at a time when my Sadhana had not reached its perfection. It marks a certain stage of my development. But it is not complete. I am not following the idea that is in it.

At present what I am doing is the Supramental Yoga. Man, as constituted at present, is a very imperfect manifestation of the Divine — he is very crude. It is so because man is living in an envelope of ignorance — in Mind, Life and Body — so that he is not conscious of the Reality that is beyond Mind. The Supramental Power is above the Mind. What I am trying to do at present is to call down the Higher Power to govern Mind, Life and Body. The object of this Yoga is not the service of humanity, or the ordinary perfection of man but the evolution of the Supramental Power in the cyclic evolution of the Spirit in the material universe. What one has to do is to rend the veil — the thick veil — that divides the Mind from the Supermind. That work a man cannot do by himself.

Athavale: Then where is the place for the use of will?

Sri Aurobindo: Well, your will *has* a place. It is used first of all to remove the lower movements, e.g. desires and thoughts etc. Secondly, you can will for the working of the Higher Power by putting a stop to the actions that belong to Mind, Life and Body — i.e. of the ignorant Nature. The first result would be a calm much deeper than the mental calm.

Athavale: What about the work for humanity?

Sri Aurobindo: We are not concerned with that at all primarily. What one puts forth generally outside in the form of action is what one internally is. Our first aim is not to work for humanity in the

current sense of the term, but to found life on a Higher Consciousness than the present ignorant and limited consciousness of Mind, Life and Body. At present, man — I mean the average man — is physical and vital in his nature, using mind for satisfying his vital being. We want to leave mind — and intellect — behind and find a Higher Consciousness. You may call it Nirvana, Passive Brahman, Sachchidananda or Higher Power or by any name.

So, our first task is to find God and base life on that Consciousness; In that process what is necessary for humanity will naturally be done. But that is not our direct aim. Ours is a tremendous task. It is an adventure in which one must be prepared to leave behind his desires and passions, intellectual preferences and mental constructions in order to enable the Higher Power to do its work. You have to see whether you can give your consent to the radical transformation that is inevitable.

Athavale: Yes, I am prepared for the gamble.

Sri Aurobindo: It is only one minute back that I told you about the Supramental Yoga and how is it that you have come to a decision? You do not know the hazard. The acceptance of this Yoga means a great and decisive step in ones life and you have to give consent to the working of the Higher Power in order to be able to go through. There shoud be nothing in the mental or the vital being which would come in the way of the higher working.

Athavale: I have been trying to prepare myself for the last three years. I wanted to come here three years ago. But I did not consider myself fit for this Yoga at that time. So far as I can see, I have no mental idea left except the freedom of my country. There was a time when I would have postponed the spiritual life for India's freedom.

Sri Aurobindo: You need not do it now; it is a thing guaranteed. But you cannot make even that a condition for entering this Yoga. It is a high adventure, as I told you. It is not like the other yogic systems where you get some touch of the Higher Reality and leave

the rest untransformed. My Yoga makes demands that have to be met, — it is a radical transition from the present state of human consciousness. We accept life but that does not mean that in this Yoga there is no renunciation. It only means we do not annul any of the faculties of the human being. What we put forth is not something mental, vital or physical but that which comes from the Supramental.

Athavale: I would do as you suggest; but at present I do not know any working higher than the Mind. What is to be done till then?

Sri Aurobindo: You have to make a choice: the individual is absolutely free in this Yoga. I cannot crush your individuality. I mean, I can, but it is not allowed in this Yoga. So, the working of the Higher Power depends upon the choice you make.

Athavale: But you are there to protect us.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, I can protect you if you have the absolute faith and make the right choice. If you make the wrong choice I cannot protect you. You must know that this is not a simple affair at all. It is not a revolt against the British Government which anyone can easily do. It is, in fact, a revolt against the whole universal Nature and so one must think deeply before enrolling oneself with me.

There will be tremendous forces that will attack you and you have constantly to go on making the right choice and giving consent to the working of the Higher Truth and thereby prove your strength. If you begin this Yoga the first result is likely to be a feverish internal commotion, Ashanti, rather than the Shanti that you are in search of. And when you come to the material plane, — there especially, the odds are almost insurmountable.

I have made my watchword: Victory or Death.

Athavale: What is the meaning of coming to the physical and material plane? Does it mean that when the Supermind comes

down to the material plane then the difficulties are very great?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. There even I do not know the result. I have received only an indication from within that it is going to be. Yet I myself do not know the end of my adventure. Very few in the past have followed this Yoga and none has conquered the material plane. That is why it is an adventure into the Unknown. One must have faith and make the right choice.

In the evening Sri Aurobindo referred to Prof Athavale.

Sri Aurobindo: His vital being has some strength and also there is a certain psychic capacity in him. But his intellect is not fine and subtle and elastic. He has perhaps intellectual vanity and a sense of self-sufficiency which may be a great obstacle in his Yoga.

He was asked to practise the preliminary step of separating Purusha and Prakriti — the witness Self and the active Nature.

27 DECEMBER 1923

Prof R. B. Athavale had another interview with Sri Aurobindo before his departure.

Sri Aurobindo: Have you something to say to me?

Athavale: I have begun to practise the Yoga in the way you have asked me to. I find it very congenial and profitable.

Sri Aurobindo: You have to continue it. What you know generally as your self is only the surface being and its superficial workings. What man thinks to be *himself* is only a movement in Nature, — a movement in the universal Mind, universal Life and universal Matter. What you have to do is to separate, or rather detach, yourself from the movements of nature. You will then find

that you are not only watching the universal action of Nature but consenting to it.

The movement of watching what is going on in you is not the separation of the true Purusha, but the Mental Purusha. As the Purusha you can not only watch as the Sakshi, but act as the giver of sanction, Anumanta. You can stop the movement of Nature that is going on in you.

Athavale: Yes. I found I could control my thought or imagination by sheer force of will.

Sri Aurobindo: You have not to suppress the natural movement. That would only mean that it would remain there, or would go deeper in your nature and then rear its head again at some convenient opportunity. What you have to do is to reject the movement, to cast it out of your nature. You can do that by detaching yourself more and more from all movements.

Athavale: Where is the seat of the Purusha?

Sri Aurobindo: Above the head is the true seat of the Purusha.

Athavale: Should I try to locate the psychological functions in different centres of the body?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, Yoga means growing more and more conscious, even the movement of the subliminal self must be felt and experienced. The centre of vision and will is between the eyebrows. The centre of the psychic being is in the heart — not in the emotional being but behind it. The vital being is centred in the navel. All this is not the real soul, — it is Nature. The soul is deeper within. The direct method of the Supramental Yoga would be to know the subliminal or the psychic being and open it to the Higher Power. But it is a drastic method, and if the Adhar is not pure then it would lead to a mixture of Truth and falsehood, of what comes from Above and what comes from below, and such a state is dangerous in certain cases. You need not take up that method but this preparatory practice which is regarded as very high in other

Yogas, is really the first essential step in the Supramental Yoga.

When you separate the Purusha from Prakriti you experience a certain calm. That calm is the Purusha consciousness watching the action of Prakriti. It is what is called the Silent Witness. That calm deepens as you detach yourself more and more from Prakriti. You also feel that it is wide, that it is the Lord. It can stop any movement of nature though its will may not be all at once effective; after a time it must prevail. In order to find this Purusha consciousness you have to reject everything in the lower nature, i.e., desires, feelings and mental ideas.

Athavale: Should we not have the desire to practise the Yoga?

Sri Aurobindo: No.

Athavale: Then how can we practise the Yoga?

Sri Aurobindo: You must have the will for it: will and desire are two distinct things. You have to distinguish between true and false movements in the nature and give your consent to the true ones.

Athavale: We must use our Buddhi for distinguishing the true from the false.

Sri Aurobindo: It is not by Buddhi that you perceive these things, — it is by an inner perception or vision. It is not the intellect but something higher that sees. It is the Higher Mind in which that inner perception, intuition etc. take place.

All true knowledge is by identity, not at all by the intellectual reason. You may put the knowledge into an intellectual form by the Buddhi, but the knowledge is essentially by identity. You know anger by being one with it, though you can detach yourself and see it as something happening in you. All knowledge is like that.

The discrimination therefore is not rational but automatic by an inner perception. There is also a faculty called revelation which represents the Truth in terms of figures; there is also inspiration which is heard as a voice either in the mind or in the heart. Even

this is a very hard practice. One has to be on guard against the lower movements like self-sufficiency, vanity etc., and reject them.

Athavale: I want to know what should be the way of my family life. Should I observe Brahmacharya?

Sri Aurobindo: We do not make rules in this Yoga. Of course, if you followed the direct Supramental Yoga then it would be compulsory. But even in a preparatory yoga it is better if you can observe Brahmacharya. You have to grow from humanity into something higher and so you must get away from the animal level. In the Supramental Yoga no lower movements should be indulged in from the lower poise.

Athavale: So it is better to observe Brahmacharya?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, if you can observe it, it is better, though one does not make a hard and fast rule about it. There are three things in the vital nature which are very great obstacles in the Yoga — there are many others besides but they are of minor importance. 1. Lust. 2. Pride and Vanity — that "I am a great sadhak" etc. 3. Ambition for success or greed for money.

Athavale: I want to know how I am to receive spiritual help from you.

Sri Aurobindo: That depends upon your faith and sincerity.

Athavale: But suppose I am not here and stay at my place and find some difficulty, then how should I receive your help?

Sri Aurobindo: You must detach yourself from the obstacle and watch it and then you have to call down the help from Above. You can always receive my help if once the relation is established. Man is not confined to the physical body. The real soul has almost nothing to do with the physical man. It is not necessary for me to give my thought to you, the subliminal self can give the necessary help even without the thought-mind knowing anything about it.

Athavale: So I can go to my place now?

Sri Aurobindo: Keep writing about your experiences and your progress.

1 JANUARY 1924

Two Tamil brothers, the elder of whom was a pleader, wanted to meet Sri Aurobindo this morning. They claimed to be guided by the spirit of their eldest brother, Jagannathan, who had died at Rangoon on 1 December 1918. They brought with them three notebooks containing his communications and some automatic writings. The younger brother was the medium. The notebooks were sent up and Sri Aurobindo glanced at the pages.

Sri Aurobindo: Some answers are meaningless. The definition of 'genius' does not make any sense.

This man must first of all ascertain whether it is his brother who is communicating with him. And secondly, how does he know that what the spirit writes or says, is under my inspiration?

Generally what happens in such cases is that the spirit tells just the thing that is present in the subconscious part of the medium; the spirit that communicates knows it and gives it out; or if someone present at the planchette has some thought in his subconscious or conscious being the spirit gives it out.

Of course, spirits can act on their own through mediums, or those who have passed away or those who are living can communicate through them. But in that case the medium must be very powerful and pure.

(*A disciple asked about the brothers' request for an interview.*)

If they come to me because of the spirit's guidance then it is not sufficient preparation for the Yoga.

It was conveyed to the brothers that the demand for the Yoga should not depend upon a planchette communication; it must come from a deeper source. And they must leave the judgment about their fitness for Yoga to Sri Aurobindo.

The report was that, in addition to the guidance of the spirit of their dead brother, they had seen Sri Aurobindo in a dream asking them to come to him. They were disappointed when they were informed that they could not meet Sri Aurobindo.

Sri Aurobindo: The younger brother who has allowed himself to be mediumised should be told that it is very dangerous for him to meddle with this spirit-world without proper knowledge. It is especially dangerous for people who are themselves not strong.

He should, after giving up this practice, make his mind strong by Karma Yoga. It will require him to give up his desires and his ego. He can do his actions in the spirit of devotion, offering them all as a sacrifice to God. He can thus practise dedication of all his actions to God and try to see Him in all men and in all happenings. That would be his meditation.

At present he cannot take up this Yoga because this is a Yoga of self-surrender in which he has to open himself to a Higher Power. But as he has already opened himself to other spirits such a passive state would not be good for him. All sorts of spirits would come and try to take possession of his being. So it is not safe for him to take up this Yoga, apart from other considerations.

3 JANUARY 1924

Raghunath P. Thakar, a Brahmin from Virpur near Rajkot, came on 1 January to see Sri Aurobindo. He had been to some saint at Rupal (near Kalol), had practised Raja Yoga, also some Hatha Yoga, and

met Nathuram Sharma in Kathiawad. The appointment was given for today.

Sri Aurobindo: What is the aim of the Yoga you want to practise, that is to say, what do you expect from this Yoga?

Raghunath: *Vṛttinirodha* — the control of the waves and vibrations of consciousness — and to be one with God.

Sri Aurobindo: That is the aim of Raja Yoga and you should go to a Rajayogi Guru.

Raghunath: I have come to take up any path that you may point out. I always had the idea that I should get something from you. I am ready to do what you tell me.

Sri Aurobindo: Your vital and physical systems are very weak and this Yoga makes very strong demands. In this Yoga we do not run away from the difficulties so all of them are concentrated against the sadhak. Therefore, one must be very strong to fight out the forces successfully.

Raghunath: I would do what you ask me to do.

Sri Aurobindo: I will consider the matter and let you know.

In the meantime it was brought to Sri Aurobindo's notice that this man had tried to practise Hatha Yoga without a Guru and had begun with Khechari Mudra, Trataka and Uddiyana accompanied by Kapalabhati Pranayama and ended by being sick. Raghunath was all along thinking that Sri Aurobindo was a great Hathayogi, because he meditated with open eyes and was able to do Utthapana, levitation.

Disciple: Raghunath says that he has made up his mind.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, but I have not made up my mind.

Disciple: In Khechari Mudra the lower connecting link of the tongue is to be cut.

Sri Aurobindo: I think Keshavananda at Chandod also had his tongue freed by cutting it for Khechari.

Disciple: What is, after all, the result of Khechari Mudra?

Sri Aurobindo: I believe it leads to a kind of trance which may give a certain Ananda.

Disciple: The idea seems to be to invert the freed tongue so as to close the passage of breathing. The two nostrils are called the Ida and Pingala currents of Prana. The third current is Sushumna on the crown of the head. When these two are stopped, by inverting the tongue and blocking the passage of breathing, then Sushumna begins to function. The theory is that Amrita, nectar, is dropping from the Sushumna even now but as the tongue does not taste it, man does not enjoy the nectar. There is also a tradition that in Khechari Mudra one is able to fly.

Sri Aurobindo: It only gives a kind of trance and a consequent Ananda: I do not know what else it does.

Disciple: And about Trataka?

Sri Aurobindo: It only clears the sight and ultimately helps in opening the subtle sight between the eye-brows. I don't think there is any other use of it.

On the 6th January Sri Aurobindo gave his final decision about Raghunath P. Thakar.

Sri Aurobindo: He has his own ideas and if he wants to practise Raja Yoga he must go to a Rajayogi Guru. For this Yoga his mind must undergo a radical change. My giving him the Yoga at present is out of the question. If he wants to prepare himself he can practise the separation of Purusha and Prakriti.

3 JANUARY 1924 (SECOND INTERVIEW)

Amritlal Sheth of Saurashtra saw Sri Aurobindo this morning for a few minutes.

Amritlal: I want to know how I can keep down weaknesses of my own nature. If the remedy requires me to give up the work that I am doing, I am afraid, my nature would not allow it. I am painfully conscious of my own shortcomings.

Sri Aurobindo: Weaknesses are natural to man; in fact, I have never met a person who was perfect.

Amritlal: I feel elated when people honour me.

Sri Aurobindo: If people honour you it is none of your concern to accept the honour. You have to become indifferent to it and go on doing your work.

Amritlal: What is the way to remove these weaknesses?

Sri Aurobindo: One way is to keep them down by a sort of mental control or by making your will strong. Of course, you can't get rid of them in that way. But you can keep them down so that they may not trouble you.

My way of dealing with them is quite different. What one speaks of as check or control is always a moral control. All such solutions are mental while I would deal with them spiritually. That method is quite different.

6 JANUARY 1924

Some visitors from the Cocanada Congress came to Pondicherry and according to the French law they were asked by the C.I.D. police, usually watching the Ashram gate, to declare themselves. The crowd was large and, being fresh from the Congress, not in a

mood to submit to the demand of the French law. So it moved towards the sea, and one or two sadhaks also along with it. The French Police in uniform approached these visitors and asked them to go to the Police Station for declaration.

There was argument and some scuffle and the visitors wanted to take the matter to the court. This would cast a reflection on the Ashram as the visitors had come to it and also as some sadhaks were moving with them. Since this affected the Ashram, the information was conveyed to Sri Aurobindo. He sent word that "No case should be proceeded with, and things must be settled with the Police Commissioner."

But the visitors — some of them at any rate — wanted to make a case. This information was also sent to Sri Aurobindo. Generally he did not come out between 1 and 4.30 p.m. But as the matter was urgent he came down at 3 o'clock.

Sri Aurobindo: What is all this trouble about? I have been staying here so long and I have my own status with the French Government. They have not only given me protection but treated me with great courtesy. If the visitors want to make a case it is their own look-out, but I do not want to make any case. Our business is with the officials and not with the policeman. If we have to say anything we must go and inform the officer and not talk to the policeman. It is absurd for me to think of going to the court. I am not only a non-cooperator, I am an enemy of the British Empire. If the visitors, who are non-cooperators, want to make a case it is their business.

Sri Aurobindo then instructed two disciples to go to the Police Commissioner and inquire about the matter and make the position of the Ashram clear by saying: "We do not invite visitors; so it is the affair of the Police to deal with them. But none of the inmates of the Ashram should be treated in the same manner."

Next day he explained his stand.

Sri Aurobindo: It is an attempt, once more, to break the quiet atmosphere which I have succeeded in creating here with great difficulty. The forces have been trying to create the old political situation. When I first came here it was a very difficult situation. Now our connection with the French Government is purely formal, almost mechanical.

These visitors bring so many things with them and they may cast them on people here. I do not mean it is their fault. But one must keep them separate.

10 JANUARY 1924

A young man from Tinnevelly, knowing Sanskrit, came this morning and wanted to see Sri Aurobindo. He said he had received inspiration from *parā shakti* to go to Sri Aurobindo who is Bhagawan. He was directly going up the staircase without asking anyone when he was stopped. It seemed that he had been fasting for some days; he brought fruits to offer to Sri Aurobindo.

Disciple: Like the other man, shall I send this one to Ramana Maharshi ?

Sri Aurobindo: He won't, probably, go, because the Para Shakti has not asked him to go there. Very inconvenient Para Shakti! She has asked him to come here!

There are only two ways. One is to send him to X (*one of the disciples*).

Disciple: I have hardly finished with Y.

Sri Aurobindo (*to another disciple*)**:** But when he turns up tomorrow what are you going to tell him?

Disciple: I will tell him it is impossible to see you.

Sri Aurobindo: What has he come for?

Disciple: He says he has come for Maha Mantra. I asked him if he was ready to do anything you ask him to do. He said "Yes." Then I told him you might ask him to go back. He said he would if you asked him to. He can talk in Sanskrit.

Sri Aurobindo: That means he wants to see me! I have no time to listen to his Sanskrit.

♑

16 JANUARY 1924

The man who came with the inspiration from Para Shakti was finally seen by Sri Aurobindo who found that his physical and vital beings were weak and his mind lacked discretion. He therefore decided to send him back. "These parts — the physical, the vital and the mental — are the basis; unless the ground is there no structure can be raised on it," he said.

A wire was sent in reply to Krishnashashi asking him not to come to Pondicherry. (Krishnashashi, a sadhak from Chittagong, had become deranged in mind.) Another wire was sent to a disciple at Calcutta to stop Krishnashashi from proceeding to Pondicherry.

The contents of a letter from a pleader of Wardha — one Mr. Rajwade — were read out to Sri Aurobindo. It showed signs of increasing mental disorder. He wanted to become a yogi, a writer, and then an M.A. and Ll.M., if possible! He wanted to raise a loan of Rs. 3000/- if Sri Aurobindo promised him that he would finish the course.

Sri Aurobindo: Which course? You mean the course to madness? He wants me to finish his course?

Disciple: It is very strange that there is a tendency to draw mad people here at present.

Disciple: That Para Shakti man has been giving away his clothes one by one everyday to somebody!

Sri Aurobindo: I hope he wont turn up tomorrow without anything on! (*Laughter*)

Disciple: It would be a sight for the Gods!

Disciple: First of all, it would be a sight for you! (*Laughter*) Madness has certainly some attraction for sadhana. I counted eight madmen with X of Bengal.

Sri Aurobindo: I must say I have not advanced to the stage of having so many! (*Laughter*)

Disciple: There is a proposal that where there is a centre of Sadhana there ought to be, side by side, an asylum — I mean a lunatic asylum. (*Laughter*)

Sri Aurobindo: It is not a bad idea. You can entrust it to our X.

Disciple: I am afraid somebody may be required to take charge of me! (*Laughter*)

Sri Aurobindo: Have you seen the papers today? Dr. P. C. Ray has conclusively proved that the Charkha [*the spinning wheel*] is economically paying.

Disciple: Is it so because the report says that the Germans have taken to it?

Sri Aurobindo: No, no. He has proved that with the Charkha a man can earn four rupees per year or perhaps per month, I don't remember! (*Laughter*)

Disciple: Even the most trusted workers in Khadi cloth have had to admit that the Charkha cannot stand as an independent

industry from the economic point of view.

Sri Aurobindo: It seems to me the height of impracticality.

Disciple: The *Modern Review* and other papers have been complaining that fine-silk weaving and gold-lace work and other fine handicrafts are being starved because of insistence on Khadi, while foreign-made imitation Khadi is coming to India unchecked! The artisans of Patan, Surat, Paithan, etc. are without a market for their fine products!

Sri Aurobindo: The way they are proceeding they might completely destroy even the little of the fine artistic value that is left in the country.

Disciple: The other movement to prevent milk from the villages being sold to the dairy is also very unjust to the villagers. It hits them economically because the dairies pay a higher price for the milk. It is very unfair to ask the villager not to sell his milk and get a higher price.

Sri Aurobindo: The standpoint of these political workers seems to be that as we are poor, let us become poorer still and die.

The talk then turned to a shooting tragedy at Calcutta. A young Bengali shot Mr. Day, mistaking him for Mr. Tegart, the Chief of Police in Bengal.

Disciple: It would have been better if the young man had killed himself immediately after the shooting so that he would at least have had the satisfaction of thinking that he had killed Tegart! Now, perhaps, he will be transported for life and he knows that he has not killed Tegart.

Sri Aurobindo: According to the law he must be hanged. Then he will be greatly disappointed in heaven, if he does not find Tegart there! (*Laughter*)

Disciple: He will have to come back to take Tegart with him to

heaven.

Sri Aurobindo: By that rime Tegart may go even otherwise.

♑

9 FEBRUARY 1924

Mahatma Gandhi had an interview with Dilip Kumar Roy at Poona. The main subject discussed was art. During the talk Mahatmaji said he was himself an artist, that "asceticism was the highest art". He expressed the view that he had kept the Ashram walls bare of any paintings because he believed that walls were meant for protection and not for painting. He maintained that no art could be greater than Natures, — Life is the greatest art, etc.

Disciple: Did you read Gandhijis view on art?

Sri Aurobindo: No. I did not. What does he say?

Disciple: He has said to Dilip that asceticism is the greatest an and no art can be greater than Natures.

Disciple: He has looked at the sky studded with stars in the silent night and finds no art greater than that.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, it is an old idea, I believe Tolstoian, that Nature's is the greatest art.

Disciple: He may be feeling some scruples about his qualification in the matter of art, for he says, "My friends smile when I say that I am an artist." He maintains that Khadi is artistic.

Sri Aurobindo: It would be quite another thing if he said, "Khadi can be made artistic." As it is, no one can say it is artistic.

Disciple: Why not? Sometimes it is compared to pearl-white in its colour. There is the stamp of the individual on it — while mill-cloth is mechanically uniform.

Sri Aurobindo: But nobody says that mill-made cloth is artistic!

Disciple: Khadi is an emblem of purity.

Sri Aurobindo: It is always a sign of a weak mind when one tries to combine things that rationally cannot be put together such as purity, Swaraj, politics, religion etc. with Khadi! Nobody objects to Khadi being used on its own merits. Why not use it as such? Why put music, religion, Swaraj, etc. into it?

Disciple: In the days of the Khilafat agitation they used to say: "Swaraj is Khilafat" (meaning thereby the identification of Khilafat agitation with the fight for Swaraj); "Khilafat is cow" (because the cow, the emblem of Hinduism, should be protected by the Muslims); and we used to say "Yes, Swaraj is a cow!" (*Laughter*)

ଓ

3 AUGUST 1924

Disciple: What is the distinction between pure mind and vital mind?

Sri Aurobindo: Pure mind simply judges or watches, arranges and accepts the Truth, while vital or dynamic mind acts. Pure mind does not act in that way.

Disciple: Why is the presence of the Higher Power not felt in the vital being?

Sri Aurobindo: Because the physico-vital is not yet completely taken possession of by the Higher Power. The physico-vital is a very thick layer and when you work it out once, it again covers up the vital being and, for the time being, tries to appear as the whole movement in the vital.

Disciple: How to know whether a movement takes place in the vital mind or in the physical mind?

Sri Aurobindo: You can always know it by this test: if it goes on repeating almost mechanically one and the same thing without creating any new movement, then it is in the physical mind.

If the movement is rooted in the physical mind the best thing is not to give it any importance. The physical is very obstinate; whereas a movement that takes place in the vital or the mental is very subtle and creates new forms. These difficulties persist to the very end. You must clearly distinguish between various movements in the lower being. We do not want to leave out in our Yoga the common and even the petty things.

9

4 AUGUST 1924

Disciple: What is the distinction between the vital will and the mental will?

Sri Aurobindo: The vital will is an impulse first and thought afterwards. It is, you can say, force first and thought afterwards. For instance, desire — if deprived of the personal element — is an impulse or force going out or trying to realise itself.

While mental will is the will connected with thought. It is primarily a thought-force. Every thought has its will. Even in the Supermind there is a distinction: there is sometimes a force that tries to realise itself while there is at times a knowledge that tries to be effective, though primarily it is knowledge and secondarily force. In the highest Supermind the two are one: Truth and Force, Knowledge and Will — both are simultaneous and effective.

The sadhak must make the calm and equality absolutely secure so that whatever may happen the inner detachment and equality cannot be broken.

ଣ

17 AUGUST 1924

Haribhai Amin had been asked by me about his conversation with Mahatma Gandhi concerning Sri Aurobindo and the Pondicherry Ashram.

Haribhai: I went to see him at Poona but I did not talk to him then about Pondicherry. But when he was staying at Juhu, Bombay, I went to see him and then he asked me if I had visited Pondicherry. I said: "Yes."

Gandhi: Have you taken the Yoga from Sri Aurobindo?

Haribhai: Yes.

Gandhi: Has your whole family taken the Yoga?

Haribhai: No. But I have taken the Yoga, and Kashibhai is staying there, his son Mahesh has taken the Yoga and Bhaktiben has been given instructions for Bhakti Yoga.

Gandhi: What is the method of Yoga? How do you meditate? Do you meditate on an image or do you practise Pranayama, Dhyana and Dharana?

Haribhai: It is meditation but it is by quite a different method.

Gandhi: How many persons are staying with Sri Aurobindo?

Haribhai: About twenty.

Gandhi: Are they from different parts of India?

Haribhai: Yes, some from Bengal, some from the Punjab, some from Bihar, Madras and Gujarat.

Gandhi: How many from Gujarat?

Haribhai: About five.

Gandhi: Who are they?

Haribhai: One is Purani, then Kashibhai, Mr. and Mrs. Punamchand and Champaklal.

Gandhi: When is Sri Aurobindo thinking of coming out?

Haribhai: I do not know that, but it may take two or three years to complete his Sadhana.

Gandhi: But first it was said that he would come out in 1920, then it was 1922 and now you say two or three years more!

Haribhai: I do not know. But I think it may take two or three years. Why do you not go to Pondicherry and see Sri Aurobindo?

Gandhi: I had sent Devdas there and after hearing from him I have no desire to see him. Devdas put certain questions to him.

Sri Aurobindo was asked about these questions of Devdas.

Sri Aurobindo: All that I remember is that he asked my views about non-violence. I asked him: "Suppose there is an invasion of India by the Afghans, how are you going to meet it with nonviolence?" That is all I remember. I do not think he put me any other question.

5 JANUARY 1925

Lala Lajpat Rai came with Dr. Nihalchand, Krishna Das, and Purushottamdas Tandon to meet Sri Aurobindo.

Lajpat Rai and Sri Aurobindo met privately for about forty-five minutes; the rest of the company waited outside. From their faces when they came out, it seemed both of them had agreed on many points.

Sri Aurobindo then met the other members of the party. He turned to Purushottamdas Tandon.

Sri Aurobindo: How are things getting on at Allahabad ?

P. T.: We are trying to carry out Mahatmaji's programme.

Lajpat Rai: Are you really trying to carry it out? (*Turning to Sri Aurobindo*) They are trying to capture local bodies.

P. T.: I am not in favour of that programme, because it will lead in the end to lust for power and then personal differences and jealousies would also creep in. We cannot, in that case, justify the high hopes which people have about our work.

Lajpat Rai: They expect you to usher in the golden age.

Sri Aurobindo: But why do you give them such high hopes?

Lajpat Rai: In the democratic age you have to.

Sri Aurobindo: Why?

Lajpat Rai: If you want to get into the governing bodies you must make big promises; that is the nature of democracy!

Sri Aurobindo: Then, why democracy at all? The lust for power will always be there. You can't get over it by shutting out all positions of power; our workers must get accustomed to it. They must learn to hold the positions for the nation. This difficulty would be infinitely greater when you get Swaraj. These things are there even in Europe. The Europeans are just the same as we are. Only, they have got discipline — which we lack — and a keen sense of national honour which we have not got.

P. T.: The Europeans are superior to us in this respect.

Sri Aurobindo: You can't prevent such weaknesses. What you have to do is to bring about that discipline and that sense of national honour in our people.

By the way, how do you like the Charkha programme ?

P. T.: I like it very much and I am trying to carry it out in U.P.

Sri Aurobindo: I don't understand how it is going to bring Swaraj.

P. T.: In the absence of a better programme, it disciplines the people and makes them do something for the nation. It brings to the front the idea of common action for a definite end.

Sri Aurobindo: The Charkha has its own importance, but it cannot bring Swaraj.

P. T.: It may if one realises the Bhava — the feeling — that is behind spinning.

Sri Aurobindo: I am afraid, you can't get that Bhava from me. You can only get the work of Charkha with a sentry over me! (*Laughter*)

Disciple: But why only Charkha? Why not the oil-mill? It is also common action.

P. T.: Yes, I know that India lost her independence even when there was the Charkha. But as there is no other programme we are following it.

Sri Aurobindo: What we require is not an outward action merely — like spinning — but discipline and a sense of national honour.

Lajpat Rai: Yes, what we lack is the sense of a common interest in the midst of conflicting interests.

Sri Aurobindo: Quite so.

II

12 JULY 1925

Velji Thakersi Shah met Sri Aurobindo.

Sri Aurobindo: What about your sadhana?

V: It is going on well.

Sri Aurobindo: "Well" means?

V: It is at present duller than it was before my physical illness.

Sri Aurobindo: What is the kind of experience you are getting?

V: At first the Power was working on the mental plane. Now it is working on the vital and even below the vital plane.

Sri Aurobindo: How do you know that it is working on the vital plane?

V: When the mind becomes peaceful I am able to see desires and impulses etc. in the vital.

Sri Aurobindo: When you have got the peace what things do you perceive coming into you?

V: There are thoughts that continue to come even when there is peace. Sometimes the mind gets identified with them and moves with them. Sometimes it is able to remain separate.

Sri Aurobindo: Have you experienced the separate existence of the vital being?

V: Yes, I have.

Sri Aurobindo: How did you know that it was the vital being?

V: Because I am able to see desires and impulses that come in it.

Sri Aurobindo: That you can see even with the mind; have you experienced the existence of the vital being separate from the mind?

V: Yes, seven or eight times I had the experience of a separate vital body (*sheath*) of my own. And I felt its existence quite separate from the mind. Sometimes that vital body used to go out also.

Sri Aurobindo: How far has the peace descended in you?

V: It has descended down to the navel.

Sri Aurobindo: Do you not feel it descending further down?

V: Sometimes it descends down to the toes of the feet.

(*After a pause*) How should I proceed now in my sadhana?

Sri Aurobindo: You have to do two things during your stay here:

1. The peace that you feel in the mind must be constant and permanent and you should feel yourself separate from all the thoughts, ideas and suggestions that may pass through your mind. That is to say, you should have the constant experience of the Purusha consciousness. This basis of peace must be there whether you are meditating or not.

2. You should have an aspiration to separate your vital being and have its experience as a separate entity, so that the vital would be able to see the effect of other universal (*vital*) forces upon its own self. These are the two things you must try to establish during your stay here.

V: Do you find in me some progress?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, there is.

V: How far has purification taken place?

Sri Aurobindo: There is not one meaning of the word 'purity'. It depends upon how you understand the word. But what I call essential purity can be attained by making the basis of peace firm and establishing the whole consciousness in the Purusha firmly. When one is firmly established in the Purusha consciousness then one has also got a basis for purity because the Purusha is ever-pure, Nitya Shuddha; he does not require purity, he is inherently pure. Afterwards the purity that remains to be established is that of Prakriti. Once one is established in the Purusha consciousness the Prakriti automatically begins to get purified.

♍

21 SEPTEMBER 1925

Narmadashankar B. Vyas, a native of Lunavada, Gujarat, came here

some days back and wanted to take up Yoga from Sri Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo refused to give him the Yoga saying: "He has some demand, but I would not give him this Yoga."

A photo of Vyas was taken and shown to Sri Aurobindo. It made a favourable impression, as he found on reading it that the psychic could open — though there was hardly any development of the mental being and the physical being was too weak for this Yoga. He permitted Vyas to see him after seven days, i.e., today.

Sri Aurobindo: This is a very difficult Yoga and it makes no less demands on the sadhak than the old methods. Everything is to be given up to the Power that is above the Mind. This Yoga accepts life but that does not mean that it accepts the ignorance of life.

I can't give you my Yoga as I do not find the necessary capacity in your nature. But, if you like, I can give you something that may prepare you for this Yoga.

Vyas: Very well.

Sri Aurobindo: Did you follow any religious practice in your life?

Vyas: I did only Gayatri Japa for some years when I was young.

Sri Aurobindo: Do you know the meaning of the Gayatri Mantra?

Vyas: It is a great Shakti but I do not know the meaning.

Sri Aurobindo: It means: "We choose the Supreme Light of the divine Sun; we aspire that it may impel our minds."

The Sun is the symbol of the divine Light that is coming down and Gayatri gives expression to the aspiration asking that divine Light to come down and give impulsion to all the activities of the mind.

In this Yoga also we want to bring down that divine Sun to govern not only the mind but the vital and the physical being also.

It is a very difficult effort. All cannot bear the Light of the Sun when it comes down. Gayatri chooses the Divine Light of the Truth asking it to come down and govern the mind. It is the capacity to bear the Light that constitutes the fitness for this Yoga.

You can meditate on this Mantra, keeping in mind the meaning, and you can aspire also to become fit for this Yoga. When you are able to fix your mind you may remember any one of the forms of the Godhead. You can pray to your Ishta-Devata that he may make you fit for this Yoga and that he may come and work in you.

Really speaking, this Yoga is not done by the power of man; it is done by the Divine Power and so it can bring about every change in the capacity of the sadhak.

You should direct the aspiration towards the Supreme. When you have succeeded in doing it, you should watch all your inner activities and see what they are. Irrespective of whatever you find there you must stay calm. This calm you must go on deepening so much so that you should feel quiet, wide, large in consciousness. If you can establish this calm you will be able to do this Yoga.

The calm must become deep and so settled that even while doing ordinary work you should feel it within yourself and see the activity as something quite separate from yourself.

You should have a fixed time for meditation and must be regular in doing it. You can write about your experience from time to time.

ON BOOKS AND LETTERS

I — ON BOOKS

After 1910 when Sri Aurobindo was engrossed in Sadhana he read very few books. But he was in contact with the world through newspapers and magazines. Besides, the disciples living in the Ashram from 1923 used to read books and they brought some of the ideas and opinions from the books to Sri Aurobindo's notice in the evening talks. Here it may be necessary only to state that the initiative in these talks was very often taken by the disciples and that these talks are not complete reviews of the books mentioned. They will be found interesting as revealing a particular side of Sri Aurobindo's personality, — one in which he was speaking freely to disciples with whom he was familiar.

12 SEPTEMBER 1923

Disciple: The *Utkal Star* has written an article on the 15th of August and the writer points out the absence of Islamic culture in the grand synthesis you have made. I believe the *Modern Review* also pointed out the same.

Sri Aurobindo: The Mahomedan or Islamic culture hardly gave anything to the world which may be said to be of fundamental importance and typically its own. Islamic culture was mainly borrowed from others. Their mathematics and astronomy and other subjects were derived from India and Greece. It is true they gave some of these things a new turn. But they have not created much. Their philosophy and their religion are very simple and what they call Sufism is largely the result of gnostics who lived in Persia, and they are the logical outcome of that school of thought largely touched by Vedanta.

I have, however, mentioned that Islamic culture contributed the

Indo-Saracenic architecture to Indian culture. I do not think it has done anything more in India of cultural value. It gave some new forms to art and poetry. Its political institutions were always semi-barbaric.

♍

10 OCTOBER 1923

The general rule with Sri Aurobindo was that whoever wanted to meet him at Pondicherry should first write to him and only after securing his approval come here to see him. Mr. X came unannounced and wanted to see Sri Aurobindo.

Sri Aurobindo: This man is quite unfit for taking up this Yoga. I am not going to see him as he has come down here without previous information.

A letter then was sent by X to Sri Aurobindo, to which he replied as follows:

"I do not see those who come without previous information or permission."

"He is not fit to take up this Yoga."

Disciple: He says that he has accepted you as his Guru.

Sri Aurobindo: It is very kind of him! (*Laughter*)

Disciple: He says he is very poor and has not come to oblige you.

Sri Aurobindo: That is a statement of facts.

Disciple: He says this Yoga is for humanity and so he should be given a chance.

Sri Aurobindo: It may be for humanity but not for him. Besides,

that is not the sense of the sentence. He may read *The Yoga and its Objects* and follow the hints given there.

Disciple: He prays for your Karuna — grace.

Sri Aurobindo: It is only out of Karuna that I do not want to give him this Yoga.

These people have a very crude notion of Yoga. They think it is something like the Guru asking the disciple to repeat the Name, or the Mantra, and then the Guru's Kripa raining down in abundance upon them. All his pleading shows a want of balance and an emotional temperament. If he were in earnest he would have taken my refusal in another fashion. The old Bhakti Yoga seems to have done so much harm. People think that Yoga is very easy and simple.

Disciple: X is very sincere, I don't think he knew about the rule of informing before coming here.

Sri Aurobindo: Sincerity is another matter; but there is no yogic demand in him. He merely got an idea in the mind and some emotion and has run down here.

♑

9 FEBRUARY 1924

Gospel of Swadeshi by D. B. Kalelkar

"Avatar of Swadeshi" and Kalelkar's interpretation of Swadeshi were the subject of talk.

Sri Aurobindo: According to his view, even this "gospel of Swadeshi" is needless. Everybody must produce what he wants and, at the most, inform his neighbour; even that a man who observes strict Swadeshi would not and should not do!

D: I had once a chance of asking Mahatmaji about his using the

railways, press, motor-car, telegraph: "How does it all fit in with your opposition to machinery?"

Sri Aurobindo: What did he say?

D: He said, "I am using the machine to fight the machine, as we remove a thorn with a thorn."

Sri Aurobindo: I see. So do the peace-makers say: "We make war in order to end war!" (*Laughter*)

♈

24 APRIL 1924

Eyeless Sight by Dr. Jules Romains

Dr. Jules Romains demonstrated in Paris that a person with his eyes covered with dough of flour was able to see without using the organ of sight. The book affirms four centres of vision in the body over and above the eyes:

1. Forehead and nose for seeing colours.
2. Breast.
3. Back of the head.
4. Finger tips.

It appears from the description that the man does not see at once but begins to see after a time. Colour is seen invariably by the nose and by the cheek. Before the sight begins the man sees colours and lights. For small objects he sees the thing dancing and then the sight settles down to the object.

Sri Aurobindo came out with a cutting from a paper about *Eyeless Sight.* Two articles had been written on the subject. In the first one the writer, as Sri Aurobindo put it, "was wisely foolish", for he characterised the phenomenon as an illusion or due to

selfhypnotism etc.

Sri Aurobindo: The second article is better.

The corpuscles in the cells about which he speaks are not the centres of sight. They are general centres of sense-functions and can be used for any purpose of sense-perception. All the senses are everywhere. The ancients knew this truth. One can see from everywhere in the body. In the normal human being the different senses become organised: for example, the eye for seeing. But all the cells are capable of being conscious.

Disciple: But to what is due the phenomenon demonstrated by Dr. Jules Romains?

Sri Aurobindo: In his case it seems to be either a psychic or a psycho-physical phenomenon; because, in the first place, you have to meditate and, secondly, the doctor maintains that sight is all round.

Disciple: But he demands that the coat and the shirt must be removed and that the body must be naked to the waist. This eyeless sight, he says, can see in the dark but not in the light.

Sri Aurobindo: All these ideas are due to Sanskaras — fixed impressions. For instance, you are not able to see with the other parts of the face except the eyes because it is a Sanskara.

Disciple: But his experiment failed in the presence of scientists. And Dr. Romains explained it by saying that the atmosphere there was hostile to his work. He succeeded when he tried again at the house of Anatole France.

Sri Aurobindo: That evidently shows that the power working is either psychic or psycho-physical. This phenomenon is quite possible. In her childhood the Mother was able to see even in the dark and she had developed the power of sight everywhere. She is, even now, able to see from behind and this general sight works more accurately than the physical eyes. It works best when the eyes

are closed.

Disciple: I 'saw' Prof. B. from behind my body when he was going away. This power, I then felt, could be developed. Is this psychic sight?

Sri Aurobindo: The psychic vision is between the eye-brows, in front, above the head. In fact not only are all the senses everywhere in the body, but they are even outside the body. You can feel the touch of two different persons and, remaining at a great distance, know how they must be feeling it.

Disciple: Would all these powers come automatically after transformation, or are they to be developed by the sadhak?

Sri Aurobindo: Everything is there, but you have to organise these things. In my case I have to develop each of them. The Power is there and is working but the physical has not the faith and so it has got to work it out.

Disciple: Can it be said that this way of developing each power is part of the general fight with the physical obstacles?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes.

Disciple: Is it not dangerous for small Adhars to try to concentrate on these powers, because they may be swallowed by them?

Sri Aurobindo: It may be. I can never understand that stupid fear of acquiring Siddhis — occult powers — which our people are having. Why should everyone be spiritual? Those who want to attain power must do that. I mean if that is the only thing they can do in this life let them do it. H was telling me the same thing this morning. For instance, if a man is capable of writing good poetry why should he be expected to do all things in life? Let one thing be well done. That way the soul develops.

Disciple: But suppose some hostile power gets hold of him?

Sri Aurobindo: That does not matter; one has to take one's chance;

risk is always there. The soul develops by undertaking adventures and even stumbling often. Before that you can't hope to win the crown.

It is good to have a certain protection in the beginning and to progress on the spiritual side. But one has to take the risk, reject the lower path and take to the higher truth.

Besides, all these things are necessary for the divine manifestation.

Disciple: Are these things really necessary?

Sri Aurobindo: They are. In society, in politics, in fact in every field progress is like that. That is why a moderate policy is foolish. They believe that by gradually going on they will reach the goal, but that is never the case. You go on to a certain extent and then something comes up and envelops the being. The whole of what you have done is broken up and you have to begin over again.

Disciple: But the physical is simply idiotic.

Disciple: Because it is so, the work becomes interesting.

Sri Aurobindo: Interesting! The vital, you may say, is interesting. But the physical is most idiotically stupid. It is full of Tamas; it wants to go on in its own slow process.

Disciple: The new scientific discoveries which the Westerners are stumbling upon are bound to change their mentality.

Sri Aurobindo: Of course. After the discovery of radium and the theory of light, Science has taken a higher step. Now it can hardly be called materialistic.

Disciple: The phenomenon of eyeless sight reminds me of the case of a man who emitted blue light. The scientists were puzzled and thought that they were hypnotised to see the light. Then they exposed photographic plates and found that the light was being emitted.

Sri Aurobindo (*smiling*)**:** All these phenomena — eyeless sight,

light-emission or miraculous cures — are psychic and it is absurd to try to explain them away and more absurd to doubt them.

Disciple: There was the reported case of a missionary who cured a blind man. And miraculous cures are also reported from St. Xavier's tomb at Goa.

Sri Aurobindo: Those kinds of phenomena are very common even today. In France at Notre Dame and at Lourdes, lame people are cured. Only, the power that is working there acts very irregularly, some get absolutely cured, while some are not affected. But all those who want to see and be convinced can see them. A friend of the Mother — a lady — was so cured. This working is due to the presence of some psychic power. There are no limits to its capacities. There are authentic cases of people effecting such cures without themselves being conscious of the psychic force working through them.

Disciple: Ramakrishna felt the blows given to a bullock and there were marks of the stripes on his body. Is this action due to the kind of extended sense of which Dr. Jules speaks?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. That kind of story is current about many yogis. It is, of course, due to the psychic sense — which is not limited to the physical body — but the intensity of it is due to something else.

♉

12 JUNE 1924

There was talk about a poem written by Mrs. Maud Sharma, wife of Thakur Dutt Sharma. It was a poem on a "Chair".

Sri Aurobindo: Some of the phrases she used are rather remarkable. There is some poetic capacity in her.

Disciple: Did you read Harin Chattopadhyaya's "Saints Series" recently published?

Sri Aurobindo: I read his *Pundalik* and *Mira Bai.* The form of drama does not suit him. It is most undramatic. He should not go in for it.

There was a letter from G. V. Subba Rao containing his correspondence with Gandhiji, V. Hanumantha Rao of Nellore and also his letter to Drummond. In the first letter Mahatmaji said that he had respect for Sri Aurobindo's intellect and that he was open to light from any quarter about Truth and non-violence.

In the second letter he wrote to Subba Rao that Devdas had seen Sri Aurobindo and that he would follow his own light.

He also mentioned in this letter that he knew about Sri Aurobindo from Devdas and C. R. Das.

ଌ

23 AUGUST 1925

Joan of Arc by George Bernard Shaw.

Sri Aurobindo: These men, Chesterton and G. B. S., try to be clever at any cost. It seems that G. B. S. wants to put in here the idea of evolution.

(*After three days*)

Sri Aurobindo: I have finished reading *Joan of Arc.* It is no drama at all. Joan talks like a pushing impertinent peasant girl and Charles VII talks like a school urchin and all the rest talk like London shop-boys except when they talk about high subjects, and then they talk Shaw. There was a certain poetry in Joan's speech, action, etc. But here the whole thing is knocked out and instead you

have vulgar modern prose.

In order to write about that age you ought to know about the Roman Catholic Church, feudalism etc. Bernard Shaw has his own views about them and instead of giving a picture of those times he has given his own opinion on them.

m

4 DECEMBER 1925

There was an article in the *Sabarmati* by Kishorlal Mashruwala stating: "However great a yogi may be he ought not to say anything against morality."

Sri Aurobindo: What does he mean by 'morality'? So long as you need to be virtuous you have not attained the pure spiritual height where you have not to think whether the action is moral or not. These people hastily conclude that when you ask them to rise above morality, you are asking them to sink below good and evil. That is not at all the case.

Disciple: They believe that a man can advance only by morality, i.e. by remaining moral.

Sri Aurobindo: Nobody denies that. By morality you become more human, but you do not go beyond humanity. Morality has done much good to man, maybe. It has also done much harm.

The question is whether you can rise to something above man by morality. That sort of mental limitation is not conducive to the growth into the Spirit.

Disciple: But they always confuse morality with spirituality.

Sri Aurobindo: Like the Christians to whom there is no difference between morality and spirituality. For instance, take this fast now announced. It is a Christian idea of atonement for sin. All

those other reasons which are given make it rather ridiculous.

Indian culture knew the value of morality, and also its limitations. The Upanishads and the Gita are loud with and full of the idea of going beyond morality. For instance, when the Upanishad says: "He does not need to think whether what he is doing is good or bad" — Sadhu, Asadhu. Such a man attains a consciousness in which there is no need to think about morality because the action proceeds from the Truth.

There was talk about Emile Coué's *Marvel of Couéism.*

Sri Aurobindo: It is so easy to make money in life and yet we don't get any money!

(*This remark was the result of his perception that the whole institution of Couéism was being commercialised*.)

Disciple: Then that means we don't know how to make money.

Sri Aurobindo: I know how to make money; only, as Coué would say, I have not the 'imagination', or as I would say, I have not the 'will' to do it. I know the easy methods but I prefer to take the more difficult path. That was the main objection of X to myself. He always said that I was impractical because I used to upset all his plans that were most likely to succeed.

14 APRIL — 22 MAY 1926

Cosmic Consciousness by Dr. Richard Maurice Bucke (Madras, 1923).

Précis of the general points discussed.

There are three forms or grades of consciousness:

1. Simple consciousness which is possessed by the upper half of

the animal kingdom. A dog is conscious of things around him.

2. Self-consciousness. Man is conscious of himself as a distinct entity apart from all the rest of the universe. It is as good as certain that no animal can realise itself in that way.

   Man can say: "I know it is true" — and also "I know that I know it is true." Language is the objective side of the phenomenon of which self-consciousness is the subjective.

3. Cosmic consciousness, etc.

Sri Aurobindo: I know the Western people won't leave aside reason in their dealing with the material sciences, but when they come to Yoga or spiritual experiences they do not seem to keep their heads; they are like children in these things.

For instance, take Dr. Bucke's case. It is evident there has been some experience. It must be the case with many other people in Europe. Immediately they break a little out of their brain-mind they begin to generalise without waiting to see quietly what the experience is about. They do not allow the experience to get settled. If Dr. Bucke had waited and tried to see how what he calls 'cosmic consciousness' comes, what are the conditions of its experience, and what it really is, then he would have found that his generalisation that "the cosmic consciousness must come all of a sudden" is not correct.

Then again it is not necessary that it must come to everyone in that form: "a column of fire"!

If he had waited he would have found that his experience had two elements, the mental and the psychic, to which the vision of fire was due. I do not think that Christ had the same experience or even Edward Carpenter.

When I first got the cosmic consciousness — I call it the passive Brahman — I did not fall into unconsciousness of common things; I

was fully conscious on the physical plane. It was at Baroda and it did not go away soon, it did not last only a few moments as Bucke lays down. It lasted for months.... I could see the Higher Consciousness above the mind and I saw that it was that which was reflected in the mind. The world and all people appeared as in a cinema; all these things appeared very small.

What Bucke and some of the other people get is some sense of the Infinite on the mental plane and they begin to think that it is everything.

His whole book is a generalisation from one experience which lasted only a few seconds. One ought not to rush into print with so little.

The division of consciousness into three forms or types is all right in a rough way. But his statement that man has self-consciousness while the animal has not is not quite true. And his argument is: because animals have no articulate speech and because they don't know that they exist, therefore they are not self-conscious. He admits that animals have reasoning power. But it is not true that they have no language. They have some sort of intoned sounds which are like the language of the aborigines and also they have a power of wonderful telepathic communication of impulse.... So, having no articulate language does not imply absence of self-consciousness. Of course, the animals have no intellectual ideas to convey. But they have self-consciousness.

The cosmic consciousness, as he describes it, seems to be the coming down of Light with the intuitive mind. But that is not the whole level of the Higher Consciousness above the mind. There are other truths which are as real as those of which Dr. Bucke speaks.

He got into that higher state and was evidently in exaltation; there must have been some play of the intuitive mind, and the intellect working at great speed. He himself admits that the experience can last for some hours. What he ought to have done is to say to

himself: "Let me see whether it can be made normal." It is no use having the cosmic consciousness for a few moments in one's life. And Bucke says that the whole of humanity is going to get it.

If humanity is going to have it, it must be a normal cosmic consciousness. In some cases the experience comes back by itself. One must wait and ask for it and see what it is. In other cases one has to work it out and see whether it can become normal. But these people are soon satisfied.

♈

12 MAY 1926

Ectoplasme et Clairvoyance by Dr. Gustave Geley.

Sri Aurobindo brought the book out from his room and putting it on the table started speaking.

Sri Aurobindo: I tried to read the book. But then I found that it was not necessary to read the whole because I have been able to form an idea about it from the illustrations.

The illustrations are of the lowest vital plane as is evident from the forms which they have thrown out and also from the faces of the mediums. They are most diabolical, what the Christians call 'devilish'.

Disciple: But the book is given the appearance of a scientific work.

Sri Aurobindo: It is not a scientific work. These people, who meddle in these fields of consciousness of which they know nothing, claim to be experts! These forms are created by using the vital force of the mediums themselves. I do not know to what degrading influences these poor mediums are subjecting themselves!

Europe is meddling in these things without knowing what they are. That is the result of a sceptical denial of any higher possibility of spiritual and divine life on the one hand, and a spirit of mere curiosity on the other. If Europe wants something genuine in the spiritual life, it is absolutely necessary for it to throw away all this rubbish.

Disciple: Is it because of its dangers?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, the vital is always a very dangerous plane to open oneself to. It is that which leads one to side-tracks in the spiritual endeavour. Besides, as the writer himself admits, the evidence does not prove anything beyond the fact that supraphysical planes exist. These vital beings can take the substance from the vital plane and also gather stuff from the minds of those present and create a form. It does not prove that they are the persons they claim to be. Not that disembodied spirits don't exist, but this way it can't be proved.

Disciple: Cannot a Yogi do something in this field?

Sri Aurobindo: You can only meddle in this field when you have got some higher power and some real knowledge. Otherwise, you get to it by the wrong end: to get to the vital by the wrong end is the most dangerous thing.

No! If Europe follows this line, it will create a black bar across any descent of the higher Light.

Disciple: Would these phenomena occur if a Yogi — a true Yogi — was present?

Sri Aurobindo: Let anyone who has the true Light be present in these séances and you will see that none of these phenomena will take place. These forces would simply run away.

Scepticism and agnosticism are better than these things. Though they are negative and in opposition they have something which can be turned into a substance of Light. But these forces are positively

perverse and in opposition, — they are against the Truth.

No opening must be given to these forces. There is an imposition of ignorance and scepticism which has been introduced or interposed so that the hostile vital world may not break the barrier easily, except in stray cases.

Disciple: But why is there no spiritual opening in Europe? and why do those who are spiritual there not protest against this?

Sri Aurobindo: Why should they?

Disciple: Could one say that there is no spirituality in Europe?

Sri Aurobindo: You mean no spiritual endeavour? It will come in time. In that case these vital forces have to work through the usual psychological opening which the normal man gives: they have to work through desires, impulses, etc. But this kind of work in the occult is an effort on the part of the lower vital forces to break the barrier and gain possession of the physical plane. If they could succeed they would retard the whole course of evolution and the destiny of the race. Therefore, throwing the doors of consciousness open to them, as these people do, is the most dangerous thing. Of course, at a certain point, the Higher Power would certainly intervene and throw them away.

Disciple: The book claims to reveal the future by showing the forms of what is going to happen.

Sri Aurobindo: The sight, the subtle sight, of forms of the future is not knowledge. It is a limited development which allows one to have some knowledge. But the higher knowledge is different; in the vital and the mental the knowledge attained is not the same.

Disciple: This kind of spiritism gives one the knowledge of the future; and that attracts men.

Sri Aurobindo: It is not necessary to know the future. It is better that I should have the spiritual consciousness than know the future.

Disciple: Could one apply the method of science to this field?

Sri Aurobindo: The scientific method is fruitless as applied to these occult subjects or even to life. Dr. J. C. Bose has shown that there is a nervous response in the plants. But nervous response is not vital force. It does not prove the existence of vital force. Vital force is like a pianist who is invisible. You can only see the mechanism of the piano and the playing but not the player.

Also you should not apply the standards which are valid in a higher field to a field of action below. You falsify the knowledge if you do that. It is like trying to prove the existence of God or of the Spirit, by physical means. One can't prove it because it is not a physical thing.

This book only says, "There are some things supraphysical." That is all right. But it does not prove what the author claims.

Disciple: There are some in India who want to try this spiritism here.

Sri Aurobindo: It would only result in bringing those lower forces here. Europe at least is protected by a certain stolidity of mind. The Europeans can develop clairvoyance — it is already there. One can develop such faculties without calling in the aid of these perverse spirits. What is needed is a change in the angle of vision towards spiritualism. Real spiritualism is not ideas about the Spirit or mentalised spiritual knowledge. Also men must lessen their curiosity in these subjects.

Disciple: In explaining life or personality modern science tries to explain everything by the external, i.e., by heredity, by the gland, the nerve, etc.

Sri Aurobindo: In these psychological fields I must study myself and find out the truth. But if science says that everything is glands and nerves etc. then I have to do nothing. I admit glands may have something to say in the matter of life or personality but I say it is very minute. About reaction in the physical my experience is that one has to make the cells conscious, — they again forget and

become unconscious, one has to make them conscious time and again.

♉

19 MAY 1926

There was a discussion about Stephan Ossowiecki's book dealing with clairvoyance, telekinesis, seeing different colours, ectoplasmic substance, etc.

Sri Aurobindo: Is he conscious of how and what he is doing, that is the question. If he is not conscious then the action must be mediumistic.

Disciple: How is he able to move an object while remaining at a distance? And how is he able to leave his physical body and with his vital body make himself felt somewhere else?

Sri Aurobindo: Tremendous vital force is necessary to move an object at a distance.

The Mother had such an experience in Algeria when she was there. She left her body and made herself felt to her friends in Paris where she signed her name and even moved an object. At another time she moved up and down a train in her vital body and saw everything.

The Slavs as a race are psychically more sensitive but generally they do not control these occult forces. The Jews, having a longstanding tradition about these powers, seem to know the way of mastering them.

Théon, the Mother's first teacher, had great powers and knew how to use them. Sometimes these powers are gifts.

When one leaves the physical being and goes into the vital world he must know how to protect himself or someone must protect him.

Disciple: Do not space and time exist on the vital plane?

Sri Aurobindo: The vital plane has its own time and space. There is a relation between the physical and the vital planes. There is an Infinite with extension and an Infinite without extension. One creates space and time and the other is *caitanya ghana*, condensed or self-gathered Infinite.

Disciple: Can an injury in the vital transfer itself to the physical?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, an injury to the vital easily goes through to the physical.

Disciple: Can the vital being get fatigued?

Sri Aurobindo: Generally the vital being does not get fatigued, if you can draw the force from the universal vital or from Above.

Disciple: They say that certain substances like incense, and certain sounds like that of a conch, and objects like a sword can prevent the Asuric forces from acting.

Sri Aurobindo: All these are not effective in themselves, but they produce an influence by the power you put into them. In the case of incense, by the power of Agni a psychic influence is produced which these vital beings do not like, but a powerful Asura would not be influenced by sound.

ϑ

11 JUNE 1926

On Einstein's Theory

Disciple: According to Einstein's theory, although there is a formed independent Reality, it is quite different from what we know about it. Observed Matter and the laws of the physical sciences exist only by our mind. It is all a working in a circle. Our mind defines Matter in order to deal with what exists; it observes conservation of Matter, but that is because the mind is such that in

order to observe Reality it must posit conservation first. Time and Space also, in the new physics, seem to be our mind's formations of something which is not divisible or separable into time and space.

Sri Aurobindo: What do you mean by Mind? You try to appropriate it to yourself. But really there is no my mind or your mind — but Mind or rather movement of Mind. Mind is universal, even the animal has got it. We can only speak of human mind which is a particular organisation of the general principle of Mind. One can speak of ones own mind for the sake of convenience, that is to say, for practical purposes.

Disciple: What then, makes the difference between individuals?

Sri Aurobindo: There is no fundamental difference. The difference is in detail, in the development, evolution and organisation of forces. For instance, I have, by virtue of my past evolution, developed and organised certain forces in me, but the principle is the same.

The human mind in dealing with the universe has to deal with certain relations of objects and rely upon the senses and other instruments and therefore it cannot be sure of what it receives of the universe and the truth of the reality that corresponds to it. This is so because, first of all, the instruments, that is, the senses, are imperfect. Even his reason and the will to know do not give man the knowledge of the Truth; Reason is mainly useful for practical purposes because it enables man to deal with universal facts as they are organised now. That was the view which Bergson took. "Reason," he said, "is an instrument of action, not of knowledge." It is organised knowledge directed to action. When you have taken up a position intuitively, reason comes in afterwards and supplies you with the chain of justification.

Take for consideration a law: what do you mean by a law? It means that under certain conditions the same movement of forces always recurs. It depends on the human mind, — the condition of mental consciousness. But suppose the consciousness changes, then

the law also is bound to change and it would be seen from quite a different position. So, all the laws are relative. That seems to be the truth, from our point of view, behind Einsteins theory.

All these ideas about the universe are based on the assumption that the Infinite can organise a universe only on these particular lines with which mankind is at present familiar. But that is purely an assumption.

Disciple: There is a new standpoint reached by Einstein's theory that the laws of the physical universe are related to the law of numbers and as this law seems absolute to our mind, the laws of the physical world are also absolute. They cannot be otherwise. If the law of numbers is different in another universe, or on another plane, then the laws of that world would be different.

It was thought once that laws are restrictions placed by Nature upon infinite possibilities; e.g. a stone has to fall down in a straight line only; it could not take any other course. But now it is seen that this idea of restriction is an imposition from our mind. There is no such thing.

Sri Aurobindo: If your mind is in search of the Absolute then it is a vain search. First of all, it is a question whether there is any reality corresponding to what the mere mind formulates as the Absolute.

Secondly, even if such an Absolute or Reality exists it is doubtful whether you are going to reach it.

Thirdly, even if you could realise it, I don't think it would matter very much.

There are, beyond mind, three Absolutes — the Ananda, the Chit-Tapas, that is, the Consciousness and Power aspect, and the Sat, the Being. These three really are Absolute, Infinite and One.

But when you begin to deal with the movements of Ananda, movements of Consciousness and Force in manifestation here then you have to distinguish and differentiate between high and low,

true and false movements.

Now with regard to the law of numbers, it merely states the organisation of the physical part of the universe and even there it gives knowledge of only a part. But, there is not merely the quantitative law of formation, but also a qualitative law which is more important than the quantitative. These laws of Nature you call absolute. But suppose I bring the yogic force into play and am able to overcome the law of gravitation, that is, bring about levitation, then is it not breaking the absolute law?

Disciple: But then another force, quite different from the purely physical, enters into play. If the laws of the physical are not dependable then what is the use of this mental knowledge?

Sri Aurobindo: It is very useful. It is even necessary. It enables man to deal with physical facts and establishes his control over physical phenomena.

Disciple: But that control is not perfect. Another question is whether the scientists would come to believe or accept that the whole truth cannot be attained by mind, or would they turn sceptics like the positivists? Could they come to believe in the possibility of higher knowledge by mysticism?

Sri Aurobindo: Never mind what they accept or don't accept, but the control which science gives is a real control. The knowledge science gives, as I said, is not only useful but is even necessary. The main concern of the scientist is with physical phenomena, — he observes them, he studies the conditions, makes experiments and then deduces the laws.

Disciple: Can one study the planes of consciousness in the scientific way?

Sri Aurobindo: I already spoke one day about occultism which deals with the knowledge of the forces of those planes and the way of mastering them.

Even in Yoga we have to do the same. We have to find out the right Dharma, the right way of functioning, of movement of forces. Not merely the law which is mechanical, but the Dharma of the movement of forces. An ordinary law merely means an equilibrium established by Nature; it means a balance of forces. It is merely a groove in which Nature is accustomed to work in order to produce certain results. But, if you change the consciousness, then the groove also is bound to change. For instance, I observe the forces on the vital plane, I see what they are, and what they intend. If they are hostile they attack me. Then I have to find out how they shall not attack me.

I put forth some force and see how they react; I have also to see how they would react if I put forth the force in a different way.

Even in knowing physical phenomena, the yogi's way of knowing is different from that of the scientist. For instance, when I light a match I do not know the chemical composition of the match, and how it burns when struck. But I feel and know beforehand whether it will light or not, or whether it will do the work intended of it, and that is enough for me. I know it because I am in contact with the force that is in it, the Sat and the Chit in movement there.

The yogi's way of dealing with these physical forces is also different from that of the scientist. Take, for instance, the fire that broke out in Tokyo. What the scientist would do is to multiply means and organise devices to prevent and put out the fire. What the Yogi would do in the same case is that he would feel the spirit of fire approaching and, putting forth his force, he would be able to prevent the fire from breaking out in his vicinity.

These dealings are with quite different orders of facts.

Disciple: There are some people who claim, or pretend, to know the result of a lottery. Cagliostro was such a person, and tradition says that his claim was valid. Is it done by the same way of knowing as in the case of the match-stick?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes.

Disciple: But I know of cases where the man used to put somebody into a clairvoyant state by hypnotism and then know the number that was going to succeed in a speculation. But whenever he had a desire to gain for himself he always failed.

Sri Aurobindo: That was bound to influence the working of forces, because he was not passive. If you remain passive, supposing that you are open to the plane in question, you could get the right number. It is not a moral question, it is a question of disturbing the proper working of a process.

Disciple: Some of the great yogis while dealing with these lower forces feel that they have come down from their spiritual height and have lost some ground. Why do they feel like that?

Sri Aurobindo: Generally the yogis of the traditional school wanted to get away from Nature into a kind of Absolute, either of Sat or Chit or of Ananda. So long as they remained in that experience they felt they were in a high spiritual condition. But they hardly cared to organise anything on the lower planes. So whenever they had to deal with the forces of Nature they had to come down and meet them on the same level. As they came down they felt they had lost their high spiritual condition.

Disciple: It was probably because of this that they were against the use of spiritual power.

Sri Aurobindo: In our Yoga there are two movements of Nature: one is the movement of light and knowledge and the other is the movement of force or will. Generally, it is the movement of knowledge that comes first and is more perfect than the movement of force and action. In the beginning these two movements are separate, and in fact, the will is more effective when the knowledge is shut out.

Disciple: How is it possible for knowledge to be ineffective or less effective?

Sri Aurobindo: I may have the correct knowledge that an accident will happen, but I may not have the power to prevent it from happening.

As one develops the yogic life these two movements approach each other and in the Supermind they are two aspects of the same Truth. The light of knowledge carries in it effective power and the will becomes more and more enlightened in its action. That is why we speak of more and more luminous action and more and more effective knowledge.

Disciple: Why do the lower forces attack the yogi?

Sri Aurobindo: In order to bring him down to the lower level, so as to prevent him from ascending to the higher levels of consciousness and organising anything there. When I go up in consciousness and try to organise something above, these forces come and attack me and I have to come down and meet them. There is some kind of organisation of the Higher Power here in the lower nature with which I have to meet them. For instance, it is possible to prevent people from getting ill, and this organisation is workable in practice and sufficient for us to go on with. But it is not what has got to be done, it is not the highest nor the perfect movement.

It is well known that once you come down in consciousness you find it difficult to go up again. There are two ways of meeting these attacks of the lower forces: (1) Either you have to remain perfectly calm and allow the Higher Power to protect you if it likes, or, (2) you have to come down and fight them with your forces.

Disciple: Is it not true that generally knowledge comes to the sadhak before power?

Sri Aurobindo: No, not necessarily.

Disciple: Even the forces and their attacks are, perhaps, like the working of the left hand of God; it helps the yogi to rise higher. With one hand He holds him up and with the other gives him a slap.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, it is so. Even what are called hostile forces have to be known and seen as the working of God. If you see what is pushing them from behind you find it is not the hostile force but the divine Power.

But it is very dangerous to accept everything as the working of the Divine, saying, "All is the working of God," like K who says evil and good are both equal. Everything is, in the last analysis, the working of the Divine, but you have not therefore to accept everything. It may not matter very much so long as you are on the mental plane, but on the vital plane if you accept everything as the working of the Divine you are sure to fall. It is a very dangerous movement because the sadhak may justify the play of lower impulses in him on the ground that they have a purpose to serve.

When one *knows* the hostile forces also as the working of the Divine, the left hand of God, then the movement of exhaustion of these forces is very quick.

Disciple: Was the principle of Varna Marga of Tantra similar to this idea of conquering hostile forces by taking them as the movement of the Divine?

Sri Aurobindo: I have no direct knowledge of the Tantric Sadhana. But most probably theTantrics tried to apply the truth that they saw on some other plane to the physical plane and in doing so nine hundred and ninety-nine out of a thousand fell.

Disciple: Is it not that the movement of meeting the lower forces with one's own power is comparatively inferior? The higher movement would be that the Truth must act direct from Above. Is it not true that the Power becomes more and more impersonal?

Sri Aurobindo: There is no question of Personal or Impersonal in the action of the Truth. It may act through the individual, that is, use him as the channel. Then it may seem Personal. It may even seem to work for what to others would appear personal ends, or for the benefit of an individual. It does not matter so long as it is the

Truth that acts.

II

22 JUNE 1926

Patanjali's Raja Yoga.

There are many persons who believe that 'Yoga' means the Raja Yoga of Patanjali. His Sutras, aphorisms, are well known. It is a scientific method which resorts to:

1. Physico-vital processes depending on Pranayama and Asanas taken from Hatha Yoga.
2. Psycho-vital and psycho-mental processes in a gradually rising series: *pratyāhāra*, *dhyāna*, *dharaṇa* and *samādhi.*

Even though the Gita gave currency to quite a different idea of Yoga and even of Samadhi, the popular mind in India has believed that Yoga means Raja Yoga, in most cases at least. It is apparent that Sri Aurobindo's Yoga is quite different from the Raja Yoga of Patanjali. It does not take the mental consciousness and its condition as the constant point of reference; for, its aim is not to secure a mental state which might reflect the Infinite but to rise above the mind. Besides, it adds the process of descent of the Supramental Consciousness into human nature which necessitates a complete transformation of the ignorant human nature into the divine: it transforms the *aparā prakṛti* into the *parā prakṛti.*

Sri Aurobindo: The aim of Patanjali was to rise to a higher consciousness. He proposed to do it by replacing the general Rajasic movements of nature by the Sattwic. There was no idea of practising morality in it, or of ethics. Besides, Yama and Niyama were never the aim of his efforts; the aim was to rise above the ordinary consciousness and even his idea of Samyama and Nigraha

was not dictated by morality. He wanted to gather power for a spiritual purpose and so he discouraged the spending away of forces in the ordinary way.

ଌ

31 AUGUST 1926

Disciple: There is a difficulty with regard to Time and Space: they are always taken together as if they were inseparable, but space is reversible for man while time is not.

Sri Aurobindo: Why not?

Disciple: One can go back in space but one can't go back in time, physically.

Sri Aurobindo: Because time is not a physical entity, it is supra-physical. It is made of subtle elements and so you can go back only in the subtle way.

Disciple: Space is three-dimensional. The question is: Cannot time have two dimensions, since time for us is in a line?

Sri Aurobindo: Time represents itself to us as movement or rather succession; it is dynamic.

Disciple: Can it have two dimensions?

Sri Aurobindo: What do you mean by that?

Disciple: It is very difficult to imagine two dimensions of time.

Sri Aurobindo: You can say that on a plane higher than the mind Time becomes static, — that the past, present and future appear in a line without a break and are static.

Disciple: What is Time?

Sri Aurobindo: 8-30 p.m. (*Laughter*) I have never bothered myself with these mental definitions. What difference is it going to

make to you if you know the definition?

Disciple: But space is something material.

Sri Aurobindo: Why should it be material?

Disciple: Only matter occupies space, consciousness cannot occupy space.

Sri Aurobindo: Why not? How is it that you occupy space? You have a consciousness!

Disciple: But such things like mind etc. do not occupy space.

Sri Aurobindo: How do you know? and what is space?

Disciple: Space is the point of intersection of two points.

Sri Aurobindo: Why should it be always material ? When you feel angry, for instance, you also get a disturbance in the physical nerves. It occupies space.

Disciple: But that is not my consciousness; it is only the reaction of anger, not myself.

Sri Aurobindo: That is because it does not suit your argument! How do you know what is your consciousness? What do you understand by consciousness?

Disciple: "I think", "I feel" — that is consciousness.

Sri Aurobindo: That is not your consciousness, — that is the result of your consciousness. Do you think consciousness is a mere abstraction so that it exists nowhere?

In a way, you can say that everything exists in consciousness, even space, etc. In fact, everything exists in consciousness and it exists nowhere outside of it. Then you come to Shankara's position: Everything, therefore, is Maya — illusion. That is the most logical conclusion unless you admit, like the materialists, that everything comes from Matter.

Disciple: Well, the conventional idea is that.

Sri Aurobindo: What have you to do with conventions? You have to see the Truth, never mind what people believe. You will find that thought, feeling, etc. take place in a certain space which, of course, is not physical space. It is something like the Ether which pervades everything.

The question may be asked: How far does space extend? You go from earth to the interstellar region, and then? Do you think there is no other kind of space? To my mind Space is an extension of Consciousness.

Disciple: But extension is a property of Matter.

Sri Aurobindo: Do you mean to say that when I get the experience of wide, extended consciousness, my consciousness becomes material?

Disciple: No. But Matter has extension.

Sri Aurobindo: That is what your mind tells you!

Disciple: That is what we see.

Sri Aurobindo: How do you see? Only through your mind, is it not? You can only say that these things — like Matter, etc. — represent themselves in this way to the human mind. And what is Time, when you come to deal with subtler things? It is not a mere abstraction; it is a force, you can say it is the action of a force. It acts and produces effects by itself without any other factor.

Time, you can say, is consciousness in action working in eternity and space is consciousness as being in self-extension.

Disciple: Why are the hostile Vital Powers mistaken for Gods?

Sri Aurobindo: They represent themselves so to the vital being and it is easy to mistake them for true Gods, because the vital being in man lends itself easily to such deceptions. The second reason is that they satisfy, or promise to satisfy, desires of the vital being of man, or if there is vanity they pander to it.

Disciple: In that case it seems that many of the Gods

worshipped by men are vital gods.

Sri Aurobindo: I think so; many of the people who get possessed by 'Kali' and such other 'Gods' are only possessed by these vital beings and much of the worship offered to them in the temples goes to these vital beings.

Disciple: Then it is dangerous to worship these Gods.

Sri Aurobindo: If you mean 'spiritually' dangerous, yes.

Disciple: Do the true Gods also harm men?

Sri Aurobindo: Not knowingly. That is to say, they have no *himsā-vṛtti* — harming impulse. But if a man goes and butts against the Gods then he knocks his head. But no God harms intentionally. It is you who go to get your head broken. It is your folly and stupidity which is responsible for the knocks.

Disciple: The Gods do not care whether a man is killed or not.

Sri Aurobindo: Not in the human, sentimental way. They go on doing their work and if man becomes happy or unhappy, or rich, or poor — they do not care. Do you think that if the Gods were eager to bring about merely human happiness there would be so much misery left in the world? The Gods are merciful because the Divine is merciful.

Disciple: It seems that the Devil is powerful in life.

Sri Aurobindo: You think the Gods are weaker than the devils and they can't destroy the devils? They are merciful and good because the Divine is merciful and good but it does not mean they have no power. They simply go on doing their work with their eyes on the Eternal Law of Truth. To them it is *that* which matters and nothing else.

Disciple: Are they very busy?

Sri Aurobindo: Not 'busy' in the human sense. They are eternally engaged in doing their work, — but not 'busy'.

♑

15 JANUARY 1939

Dr. R came today and in the course of his talk he said: "Medicines, after all, are not of much value. It is something else that effects the cure." Then Dr. R went away.

Sri Aurobindo: A doctor known to the Mother used to say that it is the doctor that heals, not the medicines. It is chiefly the healing power that works; if it is there then medicines lend their properties to the healing power.

Disciple: The ancients perhaps recognised it as the vital force.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. Even now in some French universities like Montpellier, I hear, they admit the working of this vital force. They seem to have preserved the old tradition coming down from their contact with Spain; Spain got it from Asia when it came under the Arab influence.

Disciple: The same theory may come back to us now.

Sri Aurobindo: At one time the physical sciences claimed to explain everything. But now they seem to realise that Science cannot explain everything. So, they turn round and say: "It is not our business to explain."

Disciple: They have come to admit that the law of causality which had no exception is, now, not without exception. In certain cases the cause cannot be determined because in trying to determine the cause one would be obliged to meddle with the process. This is called indeterminism.

Sri Aurobindo: They can also say that Gods thoughts are indeterminable!

Disciple: There are some scientists who are trying to prove the existence of spiritual and supra-physical truths by science.

Sri Aurobindo: That is a futile effort. You cannot found metaphysics on science. The whole basis of your thought will tumble every time science changes.

Disciple: Can it not be said that there is something in philosophy which corresponds to the truth of science?

Sri Aurobindo: No; all you can say is that certain conclusions of metaphysics agree and correspond to certain conclusions of science.

Disciple: The Continental scientists have refused to build a philosophy of science. They say that it is not their business to explain, but to lay bare the process. Eddington in his Gifford Lectures (1934) said that ultimately it is the human mind, the subjective element, which accepts one conclusion out of a number of possible conclusions. Scientific conclusion does not always depend upon objective reality but upon subjective interpretation. For example, 8 x 2 is equal to 16 and not 61 — it is the mind that accepts this truth.

Sri Aurobindo: In this case it is the accumulated experience or, you may say, invariable experience, that gives the sense of certainty.

Disciple: Scientists study the rainbow and find that it is caused by the difference in the wave-lengths of light and they might say that is the reality of the rainbow. But when the poet exclaims, "My heart leaps up when I behold a rainbow in the sky," we have no right to say that the knowledge or experience of the scientist is right and that of the poet wrong.

Sri Aurobindo: In fact, the rainbow exists for neither. Only the scientist gets excited over the process, while the poet is excited over the result of the process.

Disciple: Did you read Spengler's *Decline of the West*?

Sri Aurobindo: I have not read the book. What does he say?

Disciple: It is a very encyclopaedic work. But there emerge a few main ideas: e.g. Spengler says that Time is not a neutral entity,

it has got a direction, a tendency — something like a tension. It tends to produce certain events. It points to a destiny, to something towards which the sum of forces seems to lead inevitably.

On the data of human history he believes that there have been cycles in the life of the human race when cultures have arisen, reached a zenith and then declined. From a study of these it is possible to predict the decline of human cultures. European culture at present is full of these symptoms of decline and therefore it is bound to decline. The signs of this decline are the rise of big cities, impoverishment of the countryside, capitalism, etc.

He says that to classify history as Primitive, Mediaeval and Modern is not correct. We must study universal history and that too impersonally. The mathematical discoveries that are seen in a particular culture are organically connected with that culture. The Greeks, for instance, could never have arrived at the conception of the 'series' — regularly increasing or decreasing numbers leading to infinite number. The 'series-idea' is only possible in modern culture.

He even maintains that even if you grant that Napoleon's rise could have been prevented by some causes, still the results that came as a consequence of Napoleon's career would have followed inevitably because they were destined.

Sri Aurobindo: I don't quite understand. Big cities have always existed. And even granting that there is destiny, why could it not be changed? He says about Napoleon that the results of his rise would have followed inevitably. It is a very debatable proposition. I believe the results would have materially varied. If Napoleon had not come at that time European powers would have crushed the French democracy. Napoleon stabilised the Revolution, so that the world got the ideal of Democracy. But if he had not been there it would have been delayed by two or three centuries, perhaps.

As to destiny, what do you mean by destiny? It is a word and men are easily deceived by words. Is destiny a working of inert,

blind, material forces? In that case, there is no room for choice, you have to end by accepting Shankara's Mayavada, or else rank materialism.

But if you mean by destiny that there is a will at work in the universe then a choice in action becomes possible.

And when he speaks of cycles there is some truth in the idea, but it is not possible to make a rigid rule about the recurrence of the cycles. These cycles are plastic and need not be all of the same duration. In the *Aryan Path* Mr. Morris has written an article full of study of facts and historical data in which he tries to show that human history has always run in a cycle of five hundred years. He even believes that there are Mahatmas who manage this world!

I believe the extension of mathematical numbers to infinity was well known in India long long ago.

(*After a long pause*) No. In a philosopher it is not the process of reasoning that is important; for he blinds himself to everything else in order to arrive at his conclusion. Therefore, what you have to do is to take his conclusions and in considering them you should accept the essentials and not the words or the unessentials. For instance, there is some truth in Spengler's idea of destiny, as also in his idea of cycles of human history. All the rest of what he says is not material to us.

What is destiny? Evidently, it can't be the will of the individual. Then you have to accept that it is the working out of a cosmic will. Then the question is whether the Cosmic Will is free or is bound? If it is free it is no longer a blind determinism; and even when you find there is no 'progress', yet that Will is working itself out in evolution.

If on the other hand you accept that the Cosmic Will is bound then the question is: Bound by whom? and by what?

About the idea of the cycle: it means that there is a curve in the movement of Nature that seems to repeat itself. But that too is not

to be taken too rigidly. It is something that answers the need of evolution and can vary.

Disciple: Probably something in the man's mind has already accepted the conclusions unknown to him and it is by his reasoning that he sets them out.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, perhaps something unknown to the surface consciousness. There, again, the human ego comes in. It is so limited that it thinks that the contribution it brings to human thought is the only truth, and all others that differ or conflict with it are false.

We can turn round and say that he was destined to think as he thought and thus make his contribution to human progress. But it is easy to see that the process of evolution is universal and that human evolution cannot be bound down to a set of ideas of philosophy or rules of practice. No epoch, no individual, no group has the monopoly of Truth. It is the same with the religions also.

Disciple: I don't think such a wide view is possible unless man reaches the Universal Mind.

Sri Aurobindo: Not necessarily. One can see that much while remaining human.

Disciple: Wells speaks of something similar, I believe, when he says that all knowledge must now become 'human'.

Sri Aurobindo: That is a different matter. He means 'internationalism'. All sciences are international and most of the literature now-a-days tends to be international.

But what does Spengler say about the future after the decline of Europe?

Disciple: He dismisses China and India as countries whose cultures are useless now.

Sri Aurobindo: Then you have the Arabs!

Disciple: Not even the Arabs because they have already

declined and are effete.

Sri Aurobindo: Then your only hope is Africa. The Abyssinians! (*Laughter*)

Disciple: I think it is in the Americans and the Africans!! (*Laughter*)

Disciple: No, the Americans are gone with the Europeans. So we have only the Africans to save us!

Disciple: It is very curious that Spengler misses the fact that there can be national resurgence and reawakening.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, take, for instance, China. China has cities from most ancient times. It is a peculiar race always disturbed and always the same! If you study Chinese history one thousand years back, you will find they were in disturbance and yet they had their culture.

The Tartar king who tried to destroy their culture by burning their books did not succeed. I would not be surprised if, after the present turmoil, two thousand years hence you find them what they are today. That is the character of the race.

When you follow the course of history you may find that there is a certain destiny which represents the sum of physical forces; that is one destiny. And you find that when that tends to go round and round in an infinite circuit then there is a tendency which seems inevitable in movement.

But the question is: Are physical forces the only determinants of destiny? Or, is there anything else? Is there something more than the physical that can intervene and influence the course of the movement ?

We find that there have been such inrushes of forces in history and the action of such an inrush has been to change the destiny indicated by the physical forces; it has even changed the course of human history. As an example, take the rise of the Arabs; a small

uncivilized race, living in an arid desert, suddenly rises up and in fifty years spreads from Spain to Asia and completely changes the course of history. That is an inrush of forces.

Disciple: There are thinkers — among them Shaw and Emerson — who believe that man has not made substantial progress in his powers of reasoning since the Greeks.

Sri Aurobindo: It is quite true. Of course, you have today a vaster field and more ample material than the Greeks had; but the present-day mind is not superior to the Greek mind in its handling of its material.

Disciple: Writing about Plato, Emerson says that he is the epitome of the European mind for the last 2000 years.

Sri Aurobindo: It is true; the European mind got everything from and owes everything to the Greeks. Every branch of knowledge in which human curiosity could be interested has been given to Europe by the Greeks.

The Roman could fight and legislate, he could keep the states together, but he made the Greek think for him. Of course, the Greek also could fight but not always so well. The Roman thinkers, Cicero, Seneca, Horace, all owe their philosophy to the Greeks.

That, again, is another illustration of what I was speaking of as the inrush of forces. Consider a small race like the Greeks living on a small projecting tongue of land: this race was able to build up a culture that has given everything essential to your modern European culture and that in a span of 200 to 300 years only!

Disciple: And the number of artists they produced was remarkable.

Sri Aurobindo: They had a sense of beauty. The one thing that modern Europe has not assimilated from the Greeks is the sense of beauty. One can't say the modern European culture is ***beautifull***

The same can be said of ancient India; it had beauty, much of

which it has since lost. And now we are fast losing more and more of it under the European influence.

It is true that the Greeks did not create everything, they received many elements from Egypt, Crete and Asia.

And the setback to the human mind in Europe is amazing. As I said, no one set of ideas can monopolise Truth. From that point of view all these efforts of Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin to confine the human mind in a narrow circle of ideas are so absurd!

We had thought, during the last years of the 19th century, that the human mind had reached a certain level of intelligence and that it would have to be satisfied before any idea could find acceptance. But it seems one can't rely on it. We find Nazi ideas being accepted; fifty years back it would have been impossible to predict their acceptance. Then again, the intellectuals have gone down almost without fighting. The ease with which even the best intellectuals accept psycho-analysis and Freud's ideas is surprising.

Disciple: Some of the intellectuals even preach the Nazi gospel. If psycho-analysis is a science many who believe in it do not see that the subconscient or the inconscient has no scientific foundation. Now they seem to believe anything that is uncommon.

Sri Aurobindo: These Nazi ideas are infra-rational; they are not at all rational. That is why they call them inspirations, and they turn everything into falsehood. The infra-rational also has a truth; you can't know the world unless you know the infra-rational, it is necessary for perfect understanding.

Disciple: You mean by the infra-rational all that man has inherited from the animal?

Sri Aurobindo: Man has been abusing the animal for nothing. The infra-rational is not merely the Animal — the Pashu, it includes the Rakshasa and the Asura.

Man has been always speaking of the animal in a superior way. But take for instance, the dog. Faithfulness and love are quite

universal among dogs. But even when those qualities are found in some men you can't say the same of mankind.

Disciple: A friend told me that he was surprised to find that the cow in India is so mild and docile. In England, it seems, it attacks men.

Sri Aurobindo: Most animals kill only for food; there are very few animals that are ferocious. There was a variety of maneless lions in America that would have been friendly to man. Of course, it wanted to live and therefore used to kill animals. But the Americans have been killing it, — they have nearly exterminated it.

In Africa they had to legislate to prevent extermination of some animals. So, you can't say that man kills when he is compelled.

This is not to say that man has not made progress. It is true that the philosopher of today is not superior to Plato but there are many who can philosophise today. Also there are many more today who can understand philosophy than in the time of Plato.

♑

17 JANUARY 1939

The *Vishnu Purana*

Disciple: Are the incidents related in the Purana about Krishna's life psychic representations created by the poet, or do they correspond to facts that had occurred in his life on earth?

Sri Aurobindo: From the reading itself of the Purana you can know whether the killing of the Asura is a physical fact or not. You can't take all literally, — in the physical sense. There is a mixture of facts, tradition, psychic experience as well as history.

The poet is not writing history, he is writing only poetry: he may have got it from the psychic intuitive plane or from his imagination,

from the psycho-mental plane or from any other.

What on earth does it matter whether Krishna lived on the physical plane or not? If his experience is real on the psychic and spiritual plane, it is all that matters. As long as you find Krishna as a divine Power on the psychic and spiritual plane, his life on the physical plane does not matter. He is true, he is real. The physical is only a shadow of the psychic.

Disciple: I find the *Vishnu Purana* very fine.

Sri Aurobindo: In the *Vishnu Purana* all the aspects of a Purana are nicely described. It is one of the Puranas I have gone through carefully. I wonder how it has escaped the general notice: it is magnificent poetry.

There is a very fine and humourous passage in which a disciple asks the Guru whether the king is riding the elephant, or the elephant the king?

Disciple: The king must be Ramamurthy if the elephant was on him! Besides, this may be the theory of relativity in embryo.

Sri Aurobindo: The method of reply adopted by the Guru is original. He jumps upon the shoulders of the disciple and then asks him whether he is on the disciple's back or the disciple is on his back?

There is also a very fine description of Jada Bharata.

Disciple: Did Jada Bharata exist?

Sri Aurobindo: I don't know, but he appears very real in the Purana. It is also the most anti-Buddhist Purana I believe.

Disciple: Then it must have been composed very late!

Disciple: Buddha lived about 500 B.C. Is it true?

Sri Aurobindo: This Purana is not so early as that. All the Puranas, in fact, are post-Buddhistic. They are a part of the Brahmanic revival which came as a reaction against Buddhism in

the Gupta period.

Disciple: They are supposed to have been written in or about the 3rd or 4th century A.D.

Sri Aurobindo: Most probably. In the *Vishnu Purana*, Buddha is regarded as an Avatar of Vishnu who came to deceive the Asuras. He is not referred to by name but is called Mayamoha. The reference to Buddha is very clear; it repeats "Buddhyaswa! Buddhyaswa." This Purana is a fine work.

♑

18 JANUARY 1939

Ends and Means by Aldous Huxley

A long quotation from *Ends and Means* was read out to Sri Aurobindo. He did not seem impressed. Then the following passage was read: "More books have been written about Napoleon than about any other human being. The fact is deeply and alarmingly significant.... Duces and Fuehrers will cease to plague the world only when the majority of its inhabitants regard such adventurers with the same disgust as they now bestow on swindlers and pimps. So long as men worship Caesars and Napoleons, Caesars and Napoleons will duly rise and make them miserable."

Sri Aurobindo: That is mere moralising. If Caesar and Napoleon are not to be admired then it means that human capacity and attainment are not to be admired. They are not to be admired because they were successful; plenty of successful people are not admired. Caesar is admired because it was he who founded the greatness of imperial Rome which is one of the greatest periods of human civilization; and Napoleon because he was a great organiser who stabilised the Revolution. He organised France and through France Europe. Are not his immense powers and abilities great?

Disciple: I suppose men admire them because they find in them the realisation of their own potential greatness.

Sri Aurobindo: Of course. Huxley speaks of Caesar and Napoleon as if they were the first dictators the world had ever seen. In fact, dictatorship is as old as the world. Whenever the times have required him the dictator has come in answer to the necessity. When there is a confusion and muddle in the affairs of men or nations the dictator has come, set things right and pulled out the race from it. Huxley will have to take all the dictators in one line for condemnation, e.g., Kamal (a different type from Hitler), Pilsudski, Stalin and the kings of the Balkan states. Even Gandhi is a type of dictator.

A portion from the book in which Huxley blames the Jacobins was read out.

Sri Aurobindo: He finds fault with the Jacobins, but I think Laski is right in saying that they saved the Republic. If the Jacobins had not taken power into their hands the result would have been that the Germans would have marched to Paris and restored the monarchy. It is because of the Jacobins that the Bourbons even when they came back had to accept the constitution. All the kings in Europe were obliged, more or less, to accept the principle of Democracy and become constitutional monarchs.

It is true that in Napoleon's time the Assembly was only a shadow, but the full Republic, though delayed for a time, was already established, because politics is only a show at the top. The real changes that matter are the changes that come into society. From that point of view, the social changes introduced by Napoleon have continued to this day without any material alteration. The equality of all men before the law was realised then for the first time. His Code bridged the gulf between the extremely poor and the rich. It is now very natural, but it was revolutionary when it was introduced. It may not be democracy governed by the masses, but it

is democracy governed by the middle-class, — the bourgeoisie....

The portion containing Huxleys ideas about war was noticed.

Sri Aurobindo: Huxley writes as if the alternative was between war — that is, military violence — and a non-violent peaceful development. But things are never like that; they do not move in a perfect way in life. If Napoleon had not come the Republic would have been nipped in the bud and there would have been a setback to Democracy. The Cosmic Spirit is not so foolish as to allow that. Carlyle puts the situation more realistically when he says that the condition was, "I kill you, or you kill me. So, it is better that I kill you rather than get killed by you!"

All this criticism by the intellectuals does not take into consideration the immense complexity of the problem.

Disciple: He says that war is avoidable.

Sri Aurobindo: There is no objection to that, — but how is war to be avoided? How can you prevent war when the other fellow wants to fight? You can prevent it by becoming stronger than he, or by a combination that is stronger than he, or you change his heart, as Gandhi says, by passive resistance or Satyagraha. And even there Gandhi has been forced to admit that none of his followers knows the science of passive resistance. In fact, he says, he is the only person who knows all about Satyagraha. It is not very promising for Satyagraha, considering that it is intended to be a general solution for all men. What some people have done at some places in India is not Satyagraha but Duragraha.

Disciple: One day you spoke of the inrush of forces during periods of human history — for example, the Greek and the Arab periods. Can we similarly speak not of an inrush of forces that influences the outward life and events but of a descent of some Higher Force in the case of men like Christ and Buddha?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, it is a descent of a Higher Force which at first works in one man, then in a group of men and then extends its influence to mankind. In the case of Mahomed, — and that is another dictator! — the descent corresponded with the extension in outer life. But the descent may be only an inner descent in the beginning and may only gradually spread to other men.

There also what happens is that forces in life, at first, resist any such movement of descent. When they find that they can't resist then they accept the new element and, in accepting, turn it into something else than what it was intended to be! For example, you find that Christianity was at first opposed, and when it was afterwards accepted it became an oppressive religion. Why? Because, it was the lower forces of nature that came in with the acceptance. It means there must have been something in the very beginning, that gave an opening. I believe many of the Christian martyrs did not suffer in the genuine Christian spirit. Most of them were full of the spirit of revenge. So, in the beginning there was passive resistance but when Christianity came to power it turned oppressive. Thus, by accepting Christianity the lower forces occupied the place of the genuine spiritual force of Christ. They had thought, "Let us establish a new religion and the thing will be done." But the problem is not so simple.

There is a spiritual solution which I propose; but it aims at changing the whole basis of human nature. It is not a question of carrying on a movement nor is it a question of a few years. It cannot be done unless you establish spirituality as the basis of life. It is clear that Mind has not been able to change human nature radically. You can go on changing human institutions infinitely and yet the imperfection will break through all your institutions.

Disciple: Huxley suggests that you must have "non-attached men" who must "practise virtue disinterestedly".

Sri Aurobindo: No doubt, no doubt; but how are you going to get them? And when you have got them how are the 'attached'

people to accept the leadership of the 'non-attached' ? How is the 'non-attached' person to make his decisions accepted and carried out by the 'attached' ?

Disciple: Many people in the past have tried to do the same thing, have they not?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, they have. But, as I said, it has always got mixed with the powers of Falsehood. That is why I want to try, if possible, to embody a Power, which I call the Truth-Consciousness that will not admit of any mixture or compromise with the powers of Falsehood. By the Truth-Consciousness I mean the dynamic Divine Consciousness. That Power must be brought to govern the minutest detail of life and action. The question is to bring it down and establish it in men and the second question is to keep it pure. For, we have seen all along in the past, there is the gravitational pull of the lower forces. It must be a Power that can not only resist but overcome that downward pull. If such a Power can be established in a group, then, though it may not change the entire humanity at once, still it will act as a potent force for turning human nature towards it.

It was because of the difficulty of changing human nature, which Vivekananda calls the 'dog's tail', that the ascetic path advocated flying away from Nature as the only remedy. Those people could not think it possible to change human nature, so they said, "Drop it."

One can see how necessary it is to keep the power pure once it is established even in the case of ordinary movements like Communism in Russia. There were about one and a half million men in the whole of Russia who believed in Communism. Under Lenin they refused to allow any compromise with Capitalism. It is they who were the backbone of the Revolution.

27 FEBRUARY 1939

Disciple: Promode Sen in his biography mentions that you knew Hebrew. There are other points in the book also which require clarification.

Sri Aurobindo: Why not say that I know Amhari and other African languages? (*Laughter*)

Disciple: There are people who believe that you know twenty-eight languages.

Sri Aurobindo: You have not perhaps read the account of the miracles I am supposed to have worked in Motilal Mehta's book!

One of them impressed me so much that I was never able to forget it. It happened when I was staying in Rue St. Louis. The British Government sent the police to arrest me. It seems I was standing at the top of the staircase when they came. They climbed up the staircase but immediately afterwards they found themselves at the bottom! They repeated the performance several times and finding themselves at the bottom of the staircase every time they left me and went away in utter disgust. (*Laughter*)

Disciple: There are many people who believe that you are not staying on the ground.

Sri Aurobindo: Then where am I staying?

Disciple: They believe you always remain one or two feet above the ground. They even think that you live in an underground cellar. Perhaps, it is in this way that legends gather round great names.

Disciple: M used to describe the visit of a Calcutta Marwari who came to Pondicherry on business. He came to the Rue de la Marine house and met M. He asked him: "Where is Sri Aurobindo? I want to see him." M replied: "You can't see him."

Then with an air of inviting confidence he asked M, "Does he fly away?" (*Laughter*)

20 DECEMBER 1939 (EVENING)

Disciple: Did you read Dr. S. K. Maitra's article on Kant and the Gita?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. He seems to be confused: he has overstressed the ethical and tried to explain the spiritual idea from the ethical standpoint. The Gita's idea of doing work without desire is too subtle for the modern mind and so he has made it "duty for duty's sake". The Europeans do not make any distinction between the true self and separative ego; for them it is one. Take the case of doing work without desire for the fruit. Now, if there is a separative self, then, from the rational point of view, why should not one expect the fruit of his action?

Disciple: Perhaps, it is due to the influence of Christianity in which the idea of serving the poor finds a place.

Sri Aurobindo: But the Christian idea of service from disinterestedness is quite different from that of duty for duty's sake which is a rational standpoint. Christian service is done as God's will, that is a religious law. When Reason got the upper hand over religion it began to question the foundation of religion and then the rationalists advocated the doing of duty for the sake of society, as a social demand. The rationalists have fragmentary ideas about these things. It has become difficult now to study philosophy — there are so many new ones, like the poets!

25 DECEMBER 1939 (EVENING)

Disciple: According to Einstein there is no gravitation. That is to say, there is no force of attraction exerted between objects. He says

that what we call gravitation is due to curvature of space.

Sri Aurobindo: What is all that?

Disciple: He says that Euclidian geometry is not applicable to the material world. That is to say, space is not flat, a three-dimensional analogue of a two-dimensional flat surface. Euclidian figures like the square and solid and straight line are abstract, not real or actual. He also says that material space is "boundless but not infinite".

Sri Aurobindo: How do you know? Perhaps it is not space that is limited but our capacity to measure space that is limited. Besides, how can you say that space is limited to matter? There is a non-material space beyond this material universe. A being can live beyond our material space.

Disciple: Einstein began his contribution by proving that simultaneity of events, constancy of mass and length etc. are all relative and not absolute. If the same length is measured from a body moving with great velocity at a distance the length would change. Besides, he showed that in a system of reference if the whole frame of reference moves uniformly then no measurement within the system can give you the proof of the uniform motion.

He has also shown that time is an indispensable factor in the measurement of the dimensions of an object.

Sri Aurobindo: Time is not an indispensable factor of dimension. Movement is absolutely necessary to feel time. When an object is stationary the consideration of time does not enter in measuring the dimensions unless you move it to some other point. Really speaking, one has to know space as the extension of being and time as an extension of energy.

Disciple: According to science everything is moving. Earth is going round the Sun and revolving on its axis. If we tap on the same place twice Einstein would say we have not tapped on the same place, for the earth has moved 18 miles per second in the

meantime.

Sri Aurobindo: But the taps do not change the dimensions of the board! Only, you can say that a consideration of time is necessary to complete your measurements of space.

Disciple: Einstein has introduced a fourth dimension — of time, in addition to length, breadth, and height; their combination he calls the time-space continuum. It can be conceived as a cylinder over which a spiral is wound.

Sri Aurobindo: It is only a phrase! Time cannot be relegated to the position of a mere dimension of space, it is independent in its nature; time and space may be called the fundamental dual dimensions of the Brahman.

Disciple: Ouspensky has an idea in his *Tertium Organum* that our three-dimensional world is a projection from a subtler fourth-dimension which is supra-sensual but real. He means to say that to each solid form we see here, there corresponds a subtler form of it which is in the fourth dimension.

Sri Aurobindo: That is perfectly true, the cube would not be held together and therefore would not be a solid if something in the subtle dimension did not maintain it. Only, it is not visible to the physical eye but can be seen with the subtle eye.

Disciple: Sir Arthur Eddington in his Gifford Lectures (1934) says that science began with the aim of reducing the complexity of the material world to a great simplicity. But now, it seems, science has not been able to keep its promise and no model of the material universe is possible. A good deal of mathematics and specialisation is necessary now to understand what science says about the material world. Eddington says that the table on which he is writing is not merely a piece of wood. Scientifically speaking, it is a conglomeration of electrical particles, called electrons, moving at a very great velocity, and even though the particles are moving, his hands can rest on the surface and not go through.

He has also argued against the scientists who insist that the so-called objective view is the only view that is permissible or intended. The rainbow is not intended only to give man the knowledge or experience of the difference in the wave-lengths of light. The poet is equally entided to his experience when he says, "My heart leaps up when I behold a rainbow in the sky."

So also a 'ripple' in water is not meant only to give man the knowledge of the pressure of the air, and the force of surface-tension.

Sri Aurobindo: Validity of human knowledge is not dependent on physical science alone. Physical science is only one side of knowledge. The poets and the mystics and the artist's experience have equal validity.

Disciple: Eddington argues that even in so-called objective scientific knowledge it is mind that is asked to judge ultimately: 8 x 4 is 32 and not 23. Why?

Sri Aurobindo: It is by an intuition and repetition of experience and not merely by reason that man finds that one is right and the other wrong.

Now even the scientists have been forced to admit that their conclusions are not all based on reason. Their formulas have become like magic formulas.

Disciple: They say that they can demonstrate their conclusions.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, demonstration to the mind again.

26 DECEMBER 1939

Disciple: N was puzzled about time and space because it is not clear whether time and space are properties of matter.

Sri Aurobindo: Time and space can't be properties of matter, at least time is not material. Space and time are the extensions of the Brahman. For instance, you feel when you go deep in meditation that there is an inner space — *cidākāśam* which extends to infinity, and our material space is only a result of it. So time also is an extension of Brahman in movement.

You can see that time and space both are not the same for man every time. When your mind travels from Calcutta to London it is not in the material space and not in the time that you feel with the outer mind. It is in the mind itself that you move.

Space also is a movement of the Brahman inasmuch as it is an extension, but there is a difference as far as time is concerned.

Disciple: We are conscious of the movement of Brahman as time because we live from moment to moment and we can feel time only by events. So also the world is an extension.

Sri Aurobindo: In that way everything is an extension — expression, projection, manifestation — of the Brahman. It is only a way of saying.

Disciple: Some say that time does not exist at all.

Sri Aurobindo: Who says it? It depends upon the point of view and state of consciousness from which you say it, i.e., whether one says it only intellectually, or from an experience.

Disciple: Time may not exist in a consciousness where the universe does not exist.

Sri Aurobindo: Quite so.

Disciple: The scientists define gravitation as only a curvature of space — and, as we know matter only by weight, matter is curvature of space.

Sri Aurobindo: But what about matter being the same as energy?

Disciple: Einstein admits their identity and says that energy has

weight.

Disciple: How can energy have weight?

Disciple: If you wound your watch and unwound it — there would be a difference in the weight? (*Laughter*)

Sri Aurobindo: But what you have to ask is: What is Energy?

ϑ

16 MAY 1940

Sri Aurobindo: Even after the war is finished the Germans might present a difficulty of making it last. They easily allow their instincts to express themselves.

Disciple: Spengler even maintains that instinct is superior to culture and civilization. When a culture culminates in a civilization, its decline has begun. In the last phase of a civilization the village will be depopulated, all men will be drawn to the cities; all the cities over the world will be similar; life will be organised on mechanical principles, money will rule supreme. Then the instinct of man will assert itself and culture will start again.

Sri Aurobindo: He does not believe in human progress, then?

Disciple: No. He only seems to believe in the repetition of the same cycle.

Sri Aurobindo: Then it is a futile repetition of the same cycle!

Disciple: He says as much.

Sri Aurobindo: Then it comes to the failure of the race — that there is no higher possibility for mankind. But then, how does he explain the rise of man? If man has come from the lower condition of life to his present state it is necessary that either he must make the progress necessary, or he must be replaced by a higher species than man.

ଯ

26 AUGUST 1940

Charu Chandra Dutt's review of *The Life Divine* in the *Vishva Bharati* was read out to Sri Aurobindo.

Sri Aurobindo: He may continue it, it may be for some people an introduction to *The Life Divine*.

But you may draw his attention to the following points.

1. He states: "There can be no escape for the Spirit embodied in matter except through an integral yoga."

If we accept that position then the goal set forth by the Adwaitawadins becomes impossible of realisation. What I say is not that it is impossible but that such an escape could not have been the object for which the world was created.

2. He says that I derived my technique from Shankara.

That is not true. I have not read much of philosophy. It is like those who say that I am influenced by Hegel. Some even say that I am influenced by Nietzsche because I quoted his sentence: "You can become yourself by exceeding yourself."

The only books that have influenced me are the Gita and the Upanishads. What I wrote was the work of intuition and inspiration working on the basis of my spiritual experience. I have no other technique like the modern philosopher whose philosophy I consider only intellectual and therefore of secondary value. Experience and formulation of experience I consider as the true aim of philosophy. The rest is merely intellectual work and may be interesting but nothing more.

ଯ

4 SEPTEMBER 1940

Disciple: In a text-book of the Benares Hindu University for the B.A. degree there is a selection from Tagore in which he states that Kalidas was very much touched by the immorality of his age and he deplores it in the *Raghuvamsha.*

Sri Aurobindo: That is a new discovery — if he says so.

Disciple: Kalidas we know as one who is not particular about morality. His *Malavikāgnimitra* depicts the king Agnimitra falling in love with a dancing girl who turns out to be a princess. So also, in his other poems like "Rati Vilap" he mentions women in the state of drunkenness and is not shocked.

Sri Aurobindo: He is one who is attracted by beauty; even when he is attracted by a thought or philosophy it is the beauty of the thought that appeals to him.

Disciple: Tagore has said in reviewing *Shākuntala* that the love which Dushyant felt for Shakuntala at the first sight was only passion, a result of mere physical, at most vital, attraction. But when he met her again after separation in the Marichi Ashram his love had become purified and there was no element of passion in it.

Sri Aurobindo: That is not at all true; all that one can put from ones own imagination. But Dushyant is not shown outgrowing his vital passion in *Shākuntala* he was made to forget it by the power of the curse. That does not mean that his attraction has lessened.

Disciple: I am reminded of the controversy about the date of Kalidas's works. Bankim took part in it. The question was whether *Raghuvamsha* was written first or *Kumāra Sambhava.*

Bankim decided that *Raghuvamsha* must have been a later composition. In support of his contention he referred to two slokas: One in "Rati Vilap" in *Kumāra Sambhava* and the other in "Aja Vilap" in *Raghuvamsha.* He argued that in the former the expression of grief was that of a young man, while the latter shows a more

mature temperament.

Sri Aurobindo: It does not follow at all, because the subject matter is different. In the one the physical bereavement is to be described according to the nature of Rati. A poet uses expressions suitable to the occasion and the character.

In fact, *Kumāra Sambhava* seems later than *Raghuvamsha*, though *Raghu* is more brilliant; *Kumāra* is more deep and mature. If you grant the common belief that Kalidas wrote only the first eight cantos of the *Kumāra* then it does not seem logical that a man like Kalidas would complete *Raghu* leaving *Kumāra* unfinished.

♍

17 SEPTEMBER 1940

Disciple: According to science there is no empty space anywhere, that is to say, there is no emptiness in space. There are two schools of physicists: Some believe that there is what they call 'cosmic dust' in all space. Others say that the ray of light being material can pass through 'nothing' — there is no necessity to imagine anything between.

Sri Aurobindo: 'Nothing' means what? Does it mean non-existence, or nothing that we can or do sense? If you say it is non-existence then nothing can pass through it; you empty a tube or a vessel of the air or gas it contains and say it is a vacuum. But how do you know there is nothing in it?

Disciple: If there was anything in it, there would be resistance.

Sri Aurobindo: Why should you assume that everything must offer resistance? If nothing means non-existence then if anything enters non-existence it becomes non-existence. If you enter non-existence you cease to be. A ray can only arrive at nowhere through nothing.

Disciple: That may be occult knowledge.

Sri Aurobindo: It is not merely occult knowledge but occult knowledge and common sense.

Disciple: What is space?

Sri Aurobindo: The question remains: either it is a conception or an entity. If it is a conception only, then your observations can also be only conceptions, that is to say, they happen in you only. Then you come to Mayavada: nothing but you exist.

Disciple: The latest idea is that space is curved.

Sri Aurobindo: What is the meaning of space being curved? Einstein speaks of curvature of space round the sun and when a body gets near it it goes down the curve. But the question is: What is that curve and in what does it exist?

For instance, some say the universe is expanding. In what? There must be something in which it is expanding. And why is a ray of light deflected in the sun's neighbourhood? You say: Because there is a curve. But why is there a curve? And in what is that curve?

And then, what is expanding? Is it Matter? You will say: No. Then Energy? You say: Yes. But the energy is expanding into what? You say space is bent. The question is: Is matter bent or space?

Disciple: The amount of matter in the universe is limited — it is finite. Matter has weight and the weight of all matter is known.

Sri Aurobindo: But what is matter? Is it a wave or a particle?

Disciple: According to the quantum theory it is a particle which is matter and energy at the same time.

Sri Aurobindo: If you say that matter is finite then there must be some medium which supports matter and which is infinite. You say matter has weight, — what is weight?

Disciple: Some of the scientists say that the sun is losing weight at a certain rate and the time when it will be exhausted is

calculated!

Sri Aurobindo: How do you know that the sun is not renewing its weight ?

Disciple: What else can science do? It must take the data and make a hypothesis.

Sri Aurobindo: In the real science you must have the right data. Then you should draw the right inference. The difficulty is that you can never be sure of having *all* the data for any phenomenon.

Disciple: There are so many calculations: earths age, the rate of the expanding universe, the suns birth, the age of the sun etc.

Sri Aurobindo: I agree with Shaw who says: "They don't know what it really is." Something escapes from their calculations like the fish from the fishermans net.

14 DECEMBER 1940

Anilbaran Roy's article "The Advaita in the Gita" had appeared in the *Calcutta Review.*

Sri Aurobindo: He finds the idea of transformation of nature in the Gita and also other things contained in *The Life Divine.* I don't see all that in the Gita myself.

Disciple: His contention is that there are hints and suggestions in the Gita that can mean transformation. For instance, it says that one must become the instrument in the hands of the Divine. Then it says: *pūtā madbhāvam āgatāh* — Those who strive become pure and attain to my nature of becoming. Also: *nistraiguṇyo bhava* — become free from the three modes.

Sri Aurobindo: There is no transformation there. The supramental transformation is not at all hinted at in the Gita. The

Gita lays stress on certain broad lines of the integral supramental Yoga. For instance:

1. Acceptance of life and action.
2. Clarification of the nature of the Transcendent Divine.
3. The Divine Personality and its Transcendence.
4. Existence of two Natures — *parā* and *aparā.*

Disciple: It speaks of the Para Prakriti and says that advanced souls attain to the Para Prakriti.

Sri Aurobindo: The Para Prakriti there is used in general terms.

Disciple: Yes. I don't find the transformation in the Gita. The exposition of the levels of consciousness beyond mind, their functions, a dear, rational statement of intuitive consciousness, inspiration, revelation, and the ascent of the consciousness through the Overmind to the Supermind — these things are quite new and not found even in the Upanishads.

Sri Aurobindo: I think so. The Gita only opens out the way to our Yoga and philosophy. Among the Upanishads only the Taittiriya has some general idea of the higher terms. The Veda treats symbolically the same subject.

Disciple: Suppose there is transformation in the Gita, one can ask what kind of transformation it is, — spiritual, psychic or supramental?

Sri Aurobindo: It does not speak of transformation; it speaks of the necessity of action from a spiritual consciousness — according to it all action must proceed from a certain spiritual consciousness.

As the result of that action some change may come about in the nature which might amount to what may be called transformation. But in the Gita the instruments of action remain human throughout (the Buddhi etc.). It does not speak of the intuitive consciousness.

In our ancient works there is no conception about the

evolutionary nature of the world, or rather, they do not have the vision of humanity as an evolutionary expression of the Divine in which new levels of consciousness gradually open up, or are bound to open up. There is no clear idea of the new type of being that would evolve out of man.

If all that is contained in *The Life Divine* is found entirely in the old systems then it contradicts the claim that this Yoga is new, or at any rate, different from the traditional methods. Perhaps A was trying to synthesise the Gita and *The Life Divine*. (*Laughter*)

1942

Disciple: What exactly is meant by Pralaya?

Sri Aurobindo: In the Puranic sense everything comes out of the Brahman and is withdrawn into it. And the popular idea is that it will be projected in the same way as before.

Disciple: If dissolution is a fact, what is the relation between it and the new creation which follows ? Tantra believes that after Mahapralaya, the great dissolution, the new creation builds itself upon the Sanskaras — impressions and moulds of the past.

Whether we believe in the scientific theory of material evolution, or in the material-spiritual theory, as soon as we take matter as the basis or one of the bases we come to believe in a beginning and it seems to me that it is impossible to avoid this conclusion of the mind. It seems the ancients answered this demand of the mind by this dissolution-creation theory. Even if there be no absolute beginning there must be some satisfying knowledge which reveals the secret of creation. The theory which calls the manifestation God's Play or Lila seems to answer only one side of the question. It explains the purpose; but what about the process? Perhaps the

mind may not demand a clear cut answer if it once has the experience that everything is a play of the Spirit. Is that so? Or, is there an answer to this? What is a cycle and a Yuga?

Sri Aurobindo: There is no time at which it becomes this world. These are mental questions and the solutions will be mental and many — each equally true.

The Power of creation is eternal in the Divine and so there is no point of time at which it acts. It is more rational to grant that it is eternal and always active.

Whether it will put out the same form, or some other form — it depends. It can be the same, in which case it will come into being at a higher stage of evolution opening up new possibilities and powers for mankind. It may not be a mere repetition of this material formation.

Or it can be quite another formation. "Why this Lila ?" you can ask. The questioner seems to think that on the higher level there will be a mental answer to this mental question. That is not true.

And this idea that Matter is something different from the Spirit is also not true. It is One thing. Even science now finds it so. It is the One Spirit. You can say: "In Matter the condensation of consciousness takes place. At each stage of manifestation there is a different vibration giving rise to different elements. Man is not a pure mental consciousness. He is a product of evolution from Matter to Life, from Life to Mind."

≈

10 MARCH 1943

Yogi Aurobindo Ghose: A biography in Marathi by P. B. Kulkarni with an introduction by Mr. K. G. Deshpande. Published at Bombay, 1935.

When Mr. Kulkarni thought of writing a biography he wrote to me asking for my help. I sought permission of Sri Aurobindo. He declined to comply with my request, writing: "I don't want to be murdered by my own disciples in cold print!" That was why I did not help him. But Sri Aurobindo could not prevent others from attempting his biography.

When the book was published, I, who had a very keen and lifelong interest in determining the authenticity of the external events of his life, went through the book — as I went through almost all biographies of his, and then took the controversial points to him. I reproduce here his general observations on the book and in a separate note I enumerate the details that require correction.

Sri Aurobindo:

[*Chapter I*]

Everyone makes all the forefathers of a great man very religious-minded, pious, etc. It is not true in my case at any rate. My father was a tremendous atheist.

[*Chapter II*]

The general impression he creates is that I must have been a very serious prig, all along very pious and serious. I was nothing of the kind.

He also states I must have been attracted by the Fabian Society started by Bernard Shaw and others. I was not, and I had no leaning to the Labour Party which in fact was not yet born.

[*Chapter III*]

His treatment of my life in England is more conjectural than real. He is trying to give the picture of what a budding yogi should be like. I was rather busy with myself and took interest in many things, whereas he tries to make out that I was interested in the Fabian Society and was very moral.

[*Chapter IV*]

There are inaccuracies such as his statement that I was introduced to the Gaekwad by Henry Cotton. It was not Henry Cotton but his brother, James Cotton, who knew my brother (and was being helped by him in his work) who introduced me to the Gaekwad because he took interest in us.

[*Chapter V and VI*]

About Swami Hamsa I don't remember his name. It was in the Gaekwad's palace that he gave two or three lectures. I was invited. But it is not true that I went and saw him. At that time I was not interested in Yoga. I did not ask him about Pranayama. I learnt about Pranayama from the engineer Devdhar who was a disciple of Brahmananda.

I do not remember any yogic cure by Brahmananda; at any rate, I did not take any servant with me.

I first knew about yogic cure from a Naga Sannyasi. Barin had mountain fever when he was wandering in the Amarkantak hills. The Sannyasi took a cup of water, cut it into four by making two crosses with a knife and asked Barin to drink it, saying, "He won't have fever tomorrow." And the fever left him.

He creates an impression that I was seeking satsang, holy company, during my stay in Baroda. It is not true. It is true I was reading books, but on all subjects, not only religious books.

I gave money to one Bengali Sannyasi who was quarrelling with everyone and who used to hate Brahmananda. His boast was that he killed Brahmananda!

In the Introduction by Sj. K.G. Deshpande, who was Sri Aurobindo's contemporary at Cambridge and later on joined Sri Aurobindo in 1898 in the Baroda State service, there are some corrections to be made. He was the editor of the English section of

the *Induprakash* and it was he who persuaded Sri Aurobindo on his return to India in 1893 to write a series of articles on Indian politics under the heading "New Lamps for Old" which made a great stir in the Congress of those days.

1. Sri Aurobindo did not attend any grammar school at Manchester — as is stated in the introduction.

2. He mentions that Shivram Pant Fadke taught Sri Aurobindo Marathi and Bengali. He did not learn these languages from Mr. Fadke.

3. It is asserted that one "Bhasker Shastri Joshi gave him lessons in Sanskrit and Gujarati." Sri Aurobindo did not learn Sanskrit from anyone at Baroda. He read the Mahabharata by himself and also read works of Kalidas and one drama of Bhavabhuti as well as Ramayana.

4. It is stated that Sri Aurobindo's patriotism got the religious colour by his contact with one Swami Hamsa. Swami Hamsa had nothing to do with his nationalism. He was a Hathayogi and Sri Aurobindo attended his lecture in the palace on invitation. He did not meet him at his place.

5. Mohanpuri did not give him *daivi upāsanā* — introduction to spiritual life. It was for a purely political purpose that Sri Aurobindo took a Shakti Mantra from him. He performed a certain Yajna for the same purpose. But it was not Yoga.

6. Bhawāni Mandir: There is a similarity to the *Ananda Math* in that both envisage spiritual life and politics together. The temple of Bhawani was to be there for initiating men for complete consecration to the service of Mother India. It was for preparing political Sannyasins. But this scheme did not get materialised. Sri Aurobindo took to politics and Barin to revolution. The latter tried to find a place in the Vindhya mountains for the Bhawani Mandir. But he came back with mountain fever.

Norton's eloquent advocacy in the court, or the government's

repression, had nothing to do with the failure of the scheme. In fact it was never tried.

7. He states that Sri Aurobindo resigned from the National College because of the differences with the members of the committee.

It is true he had his differences, but he never spoke about them. He sent in his resignation when the first trial was launched against him in August 1907. But on his acquittal they reappointed him. When he was again tried in the Alipore Bomb Case in 1908, they accepted his resignation.

So, the committee members had no open difference with him, there was no clash. They wanted to make the National College a place of learning, Sri Aurobindo wanted to make it a centre of life.

These very inaccuracies of the introduction have been dwelt upon by Mr. Kulkarni in his book, so no separate list is being given for the mistakes in the latter.

One may only add that Sri Aurobindo did not meet Madhavdasji of Malsar; at least, he did not remember having met him.

♓

25 MARCH 1943

Swami Jnanananda's[10] book contains the following points.

1. The material world is made to answer, or suit, our senses.
2. There is a higher world of the super-ego where things are quite differently arranged.
3. One has to break through these two to reach the Absolute.

[10] Swami Jnanananda was originally the son of a Zamindar in Andhra. After Sannyas he went to North India and became a scientist. He went to Prague and Liverpool and was in the National Physical Laboratory, Delhi.

4. He believes in bringing down the Absolute into Life.

After hearing these points Sri Aurobindo said: "It is quite interesting. I don't know whether you can explain Raja Yoga as he does. But what is his Super-ego? I don't know. Sometimes it seems what I call the subliminal self, and sometimes the psychic being. It may be something like the Over-soul."

♓

27 MARCH 1943

Disciple: Jnanananda says that the sense-world is created by the sense-ego. The so-called real world is created by the Super-ego. This Super-ego has a personality which has to be dissolved.

Sri Aurobindo: So, it is not the cosmic consciousness or the Purusha or the Over-soul.

Disciple: Then there is the Absolute. One has to break through the sense-world, the real world, and then one can enter into the Absolute Divine.

Sri Aurobindo: How is this to be done?

Disciple: Through one of the four Yogas: Raja, Jnana, Karma and Bhakti. One has to see this sense-world and the Super-ego-world in the light of the Absolute Divine.

Disciple: He believes this is the spontaneous Purna Yoga.

Sri Aurobindo: But he does not indicate how the Absolute Divine is to act at all in life — unless he discovers something like the Supermind.

At any rate, it is an original book, quite interesting — the man has intelligence above the average.

Disciple: But there are people who, having intelligence, steal passages from your writings and I know the case of a Swami who is

famous throughout India and the world who has plagiarized passages from your books.

Sri Aurobindo (*with a smile*)**:** The Unconscious might have played a part. (*Laughter*) Or, he might turn round and say that it was taken by me from him! (*Laughter*) Or, that it was independently written! (*Laughter*)

♓

6 APRIL 1943

Collected Poems by Gerard Manley Hopkins.

A review of his poems appeared in a Christian monthly magazine, *New Review*. The reviewer there writes that Gerard Hopkins had tried a kind of quantitative verse in English. Bridges has written notes on the 2nd edition of these poems.

Sri Aurobindo: The poem on "Mary" is very fine. Hopkins nearly becomes a great poet in his sonnets. He is not a mystic poet but a religious one. In all Catholic poets there is a note of acute suffering which he also shares. Christina Rosetti is better in that respect.

It is not that his subject is always great, but the force which he brings into his poems. In one he simply says in effect: "O God, I grant that you are just, but I don't understand why I should be made to suffer while others who do not care for any higher values of life get all the good things of life."

There is no sign of quantitative verse, he depends on 'accent' for his verse.

♓

8 APRIL 1943

Poetry of the Invisible by Mehdi Imam.

Sri Aurobindo: His idea that the beings of the subtle worlds are mere creations of human imagination, or of the human soul, would only mean that they have no independent existence, which is not quite true.

I believe he has been influenced by Sufism. But his general thesis is quite tenable: that is to say, right up to the beginning of the modernist period the poets, at least most of them, seem to have some perception or experience of other subtler worlds. They admit the existence of those worlds in some way. They sometimes even assert that this world is an illusion.

Only, his estimate of Bridges is one-sided. Probably, he wrote it at a time when Bridges was the craze, or when the *Testament of Beauty* was enthusiastically welcomed. I never thought much of his poetry, even in those early days, from what I saw of quotations from him. He is never rhythmical except when he rhymes. In his blank verse he is intolerable. Even the quotations given in this book are prosaic. Hardy is very good at times, at others he slips into want of rhythm.

Mehdi Imam's interpretation of Shelley and other poets as having the experience of cosmic unity or unity with the Spirit is not quite true. With Shelley it is sublimated eroticism. Shelley used to fall in love with almost every woman thinking her to be an angel and ended by finding her to be a devil.

He goes too far in his theory when he asserts that the "mists" of which Tennyson speaks in his *Morte d' Arthur* is the "ectoplasm".

♈

5 MAY 1943

The talk began with a reference to an article on *Kathopanishad* by Dr. S. K. Maitra.

Disciple: The opposition between Shreyas and Preyas has been interpreted by him as an opposition between 'Existence' and 'Value'.

Sri Aurobindo: What is 'Value'? He has not defined it. I do not know what he means by saying: "God or the ultimate Reality is the highest value." He almost seems to imply that there is no 'being' in God, only 'value'.

Disciple: He also speaks of the opposition between the first two and the last two lines of Yama's speech: "One cannot attain the Permanent — Dhruva — by means which are transient." And then he speaks of his having attained the Eternal — Nityam— by means of things impermanent.

Sri Aurobindo: His interpretation seems a little far-fetched. It is the Fire that makes the attainment of the Eternal possible. The first two lines only mean that: If you are attached to the ephemeral you can't attain the Eternal. The last two lines mean that: If one offers the impermanent things into the Fire then it can make one attain the Eternal.

♈

11 MAY 1943

Bharati Sarabhai's poetical work *The Peoples Well* was received.

Sri Aurobindo: The English is good and the diction poetic — but the poetry is mostly lacking.

She is not clear about what she wants to say. India seems to be the old woman in the poem and the idea is that she has something

very precious which nobody knows about and which she may discover some day.

ଣ

20 AUGUST 1943

"Mayavada" — An article by Prof. Malkani.

Malkani's contention seemed to be: 1. That Sri Aurobindo had tried to answer Shankara in some of the chapters in *The Life Divine*. 2. That Mayavada is true if one grants its premises, etc.

Sri Aurobindo: I am not answering Shankara's Mayavada in particular in *The Life Divine*. I had to examine the stand taken up by all those thinkers who consider the world an illusion for various reasons. I have examined their grounds.

As to Mayavada being true, each philosophy is true on its own basis. So is Mayavada if you accept its premises. In my examination I was trying to see whether there was anything in any of the possible positions of Mayavada which would make it obligatory on the human mind to accept it. I find that there is no such obligation, at least I don't find any on my mind. What I say amounts to that.

Besides, the position of Mayavada has been taken by many even in Europe, and the Christian religion took a similar position even before Shankara. It considers this world as almost unreal.

"Vanity of vanities, all is vanity and vexation of the Spirit." This world is a mistranslation of the world of the Spirit. They also make a distinction between Soul and Spirit. They maintain that this world is necessary for the Soul, but another world belongs to the Spirit.

Plotinus takes up a position in which the true world is not here but above.

Schopenhauer thinks this world a kind of delirium — which

almost comes to the theory of illusion. There are others in the West who have taken a similar stand.

♏

20 NOVEMBER 1943

Homage to Sri Aurobindo by Dr. K. R. S. Iyengar.

The manuscript was submitted to Sri Aurobindo. The following corrections were suggested and they were carried out in the text by the author. The items are given here as an illustration of Sri Aurobindo's scrupulousness for exactness and detail.

1. "He ascribes certain writings of Shyam Sundar Chakravarty to me. He closely imitated my style."

2. "He makes me an apostle of non-violence. The quotation he gives from the statement in the court I don't remember at all, because I made no statement."

3. About a district political conference — which was broken up — and about a separate meeting held by the nationalists over which Sri Aurobindo presided — "I do not remember whether it was Midnapore or Hugli."

Then on 29-11-1943 Sri Aurobindo said: "There was a stormy meeting at Midnapore. It was the storm that preceded Nagpur and Surat. But there was no split at Hugli."

4. Regarding letters to Mrinalini Devi he said: "He has made so much rhetoric and lecturing out of them that they cease to be letters."

5. "He mentions that I was ill in jail. I do not remember to have had any illness in jail, except perhaps eczema-trouble in the foot, due to dirty blankets and germs."

6. "I did not take the B.A. degree; I only took double Tripos at

Cambridge. It was Oscar Browning as Provost who spoke highly of me as a student. He was well known at Cambridge. He examined the Latin and Greek papers."

7. "I was not appointed in the Khangi [*Interior*] Department at Baroda and I was not the Private Secretary though I acted as one in the absence of the secretary. It was only during the Kashmere tour that I was the Private Secretary to the Maharaja. But I had several tussles with him and he did not want to repeat the experiment."

8. "He states that I was invited to all the dinners and banquets — well, I never went to any State-dinner or banquet. Only I used to be called privately to dinner and I attended."

II — ON LETTERS

25 SEPTEMBER 1923

C. R. Das sent a wire to Sri Aurobindo asking for a message for the paper *Forward* that he was bringing out from Calcutta. Sri Aurobindo dictated the following reply.

Sri Aurobindo: Such a message at present would amount to a public announcement and I do not like to make any pronouncement at present. It must be done at the proper time, because it would set in motion forces in opposition. Besides, there are other papers that have demanded similar messages and I would not know how to refuse them if I make up my mind to send you one.

Again, if I put myself out like that, it would interfere with the silent support which I am giving you. I am acting in a particular way, and if I create directly a field then the two would mutually interfere. I do not at present want to act on the physical plane as it would evoke opposition.

♏

20 NOVEMBER 1923

One Mr. K had written some letters to Sri Aurobindo and asked for explanations of his experiences and wanted guidance. His questions were read out to Sri Aurobindo.

Sri Aurobindo: Ah, I see; he is the same man, — son of a pleader. No, he is impossible.

Disciple: There is one reply to all his questions.

Sri Aurobindo: What is it?

Disciple: God knows everything! (*Laughter*)

Disciple: That is a reply to all questions past, present and future. He would no longer trouble you.

Sri Aurobindo: Then better take him over under you.

(*After a little pause*) He is quite unprepared. The descent, if it takes place, is more likely to smash him up.

Besides, he is wrong in thinking that attraction for woman is abnormal; it is quite normal. It is a sick mind that makes him think otherwise.

When I first saw him he was quite nervous. I could see the whole being coming and entering into me.

Disciple: He says he has lost his intellectual power and will and everything else. Something must descend, he says, from Above and raise him up from his present condition.

Sri Aurobindo: It is very funny how people find a glimpse of the higher life and then go on jumping about.

Disciple: I think that before one man becomes divine, half the world will go mad. (*Laughter*)

But someone must ask him to find a room for himself.

Sri Aurobindo: I thought you wanted him to have a room for meditation; first handcuff him and then make him meditate!

Disciple: I am afraid he will first give a yell and then jump. (*Laughter*)

Disciple: How is it that the higher Light misses its way in such cases?

Sri Aurobindo: It is not exactly missing its way. It is like a force working and if somebody by chance happens to get into the circuit and if there is something in him that is responsive then he gets a glimpse. But his other parts, being not prepared, do not understand it.

I found he had some psychic glimpses here and there, but he has thoroughly collapsed now.

Disciple: I expected a madder look in his face.

Sri Aurobindo: I found it in him at the first sight.

Disciple: Even now he has some kind of force.

Sri Aurobindo: You call it force? It is not force, it is some wild intensity of weakness.

8 JANUARY 1924

A letter from Krishnashashi, who was mentally deranged, was read in which he gave various reasons why he should be permitted to come to Pondicherry. One was that he was becoming black in the colour of his body, but it was shining black! The Madrasi too has a dark complexion, so he should stay at Pondicherry!

Sri Aurobindo (*after a hearty laugh*)**:** Even in his madness he is always original! He never goes along the beaten track!

(*Then about another man wanting to take up Yoga he said*)

He has some easy itching for Yoga, — I mean restlessness due to something central in him wanting it. But there is something that may obstruct the Yoga.

10 JANUARY 1924

There was an article in the *Forward* on Manmohan Ghose's death in which it was written that "He had left behind him Barindra Kumar and Sri Aurobindo."

Sri Aurobindo (*after a good laugh*)**:** People do not understand 'leaving behind' generally refers to children and not to brothers! These newspapers write anything without proper inquiry. The age given to Manmohan is quite wrong. It is said to be the same as mine and in that case, naturally, we are twins! (*Laughter*)

There was reading of a letter of condolence from one Bharati from Pudukotah on Manmohan's death. The last sentence was: "Let him enjoy a long life in heaven at least."

Sri Aurobindo: He seems to be very much afraid that he might be short-lived even there! (*Laughter*)

Do you know this man is writing my biography — *Aurobindo Vijayam* — without knowing anything about my life? (*Hearty laughter*) I think the last scene will be one in which I shall be described as overcome by grief at Manmohan's death!

II

10 JULY 1924

A letter from Taraknath Das describing certain of his experiences and asking certain questions was read.

The questions were about:

1. Jada, Unmana, and Chaitanya Samadhi.
2. Cosmic emotion.
3. Soul-unity and its meaning.
4. The attitude of the soul to Shakti's work.

Sri Aurobindo: He has been progressing well and should be asked to continue till he has a glimpse of something higher than the mind.

(*Sri Aurobindo then took up the question of Samadhi*)

There are many ways of classification and there are no hard and fast rules. In the old way, they always classified Samadhi with regard to the Mind, — calling it Savikalpa and Nirvikalpa, or Sakalpa and Nirkalpa. All that is with reference to the Mind.

If he wants to know the meaning which Ramakrishna gave to those terms then he must find it out himself.

Disciple: Ramakrishna means by Jada the Nirvikalpa and by Chaitanya the experience of ones being floating in the ocean like a fish or like a bird flying in the infinite sky.

Sri Aurobindo: That is, again, with reference to the Mind — and mental yoga. You can classify it in different ways. But generally the classifications are based upon:

1. Mind, or

2. According to the plane — vital, physical or mental — on which it occurs, or

3. According to its reference to Jagrata, Swapna, and Sushupti states of consciousness (the waking, the dream state and the state of condensed consciousness).

Disciple: What is the Sushupti condition?

Sri Aurobindo: It is a state of consciousness with reference to which your mind is not awake, your mind is Sushupta — asleep — and so you do not project yourself in the external or in the internal being. But what is Sushupta to one may be consciousness to another. A man may be quite conscious in Sushupti.

Disciple: How?

Sri Aurobindo: For instance, in the Supermind all things meet. These things, Savikalpa, etc., do not apply to the Supermind.

Disciple: In the old paths they used Sushupta condition to go into the Superconscient stage, did they not?

Sri Aurobindo: That was the use of it. But then they recognised no intermediate gradations. From Mind they jumped to the Parabrahman; for them the Superconscient was the Brahman only. But the stages that you find in the Vedas and in the Upanishads after the Mind are left behind, all become lost.

Disciple: The classifications in the Upanishads confuse many people.

Sri Aurobindo: In the Upanishads it is quite different from abstract philosophy. There different men have given their own different experiences and you have to take them as experiences. For instance, I myself made different classifications of various movements and their mixture and also the mixtures of mixtures, their comparisons and subtler movements. But I have used them for my own guidance, — for personal knowledge and use. But I would not think of putting them in book-form.

These classifications are there as steps and as general guidance. Once you have the experience you can have your own classification for guidance. Of course, general things about the physical, the vital which everybody can experience and which are the same for all can be given in book-form; or when the higher experiences come, for instance, Intuition and Revelation, etc., then you can know them yourself.

Disciple: Once it seems the Divine Mother came to Ramakrishna with a golden body, and told him to take it. But he said, "No. I don't want it," and then later he said: "Suppose I kept it, then all people would rush to me."

Sri Aurobindo: Was he afraid of that? In Ramakrishna you find clear intuition, and revelations of the higher order within a limited area, — they are not of the universal kind. In this Yoga one has to go beyond conventional ideas and also to have a mind which is elastic.

In the jail I was proceeding by the old method and I found all the

conventional ideas were broken. For eight or ten days all sorts of ideas, — of cruelty, hatred, and other disgusting thoughts — came till the mind ceased to give any reaction to them and then all old ideas were broken. You can't have the Higher Consciousness unless the mind is very elastic and open and receptive.

You have also to accept Asuric and Rakshasic things, get the knowledge — know what they are, and throw them away. Otherwise the ascent to the Supermind would be narrow and limited, not rich and varied and wide. But, of course, all cannot do that.

♏

25 NOVEMBER 1924

D had written a letter to M, a disciple, on 14 November. It was meant to be read to Sri Aurobindo. D had requested Sri Aurobindo to give his views on marriage, particularly as he intended taking up the Yoga in future. He wanted to know what attitude a person intending to take up the highest spiritual life should adopt towards marriage. D admitted that he felt sex-attraction and did not want to resort merely to repression.

Sri Anrobindo: It is rather a delicate matter to answer. Perhaps the following points may be offered to him.

1. What is ordinarily known as sex-attraction is mainly a pull on the vital and physical planes between man and woman. This attraction, generally, gets mixed up with emotions and sentiments and is almost always mistaken for love, or psychic relation.

For those who want to give up ordinary life altogether, that is to say, for Sannyasins, etc., marriage in the ordinary sense is out of the question. Because marriage is the one thing that strongly fixes down a person to life. Woman by nature has the strongest tendency to

stick to life. She, generally, pulls down the man and fixes him to life. This is especially intended by Nature for the continuance of the race and life.

2. There is a meeting together of the psychic of the man and of the woman, — a union of soul with soul. This, of course, is difficult to get.

The first point refers to the ordinary life in the vital and the physical planes.

In the higher life there are two types, two gradations, of meeting of man and woman. One is the psychic union, the other is the spiritual. The man of high idealism — the poet, the artist, has a developed psychic being. In the ordinary man, it is not developed. For a psychically developed man to get a woman of the right type is rather difficult. But if such a union could come about it would be a great help to both of them.

Disciple: But his question would be how to find out the right sort of woman for marriage.

Sri Aurobindo: There is no hard and fast rule in these things. It is all to be found out by an inner perception. It is not a science, it is an art.

Even when the union of the psychic takes place between the two, the other parts, the mental, the vital and the physical of one may clash with that of the other and the gain of the psychic being may be spoiled by this disharmony. But if the psychic being dominates in both then these difficulties may slowly clear up. The spiritual relation between man and woman is the most difficult to achieve. The man seeking the higher divine life, the seeker after Divine Consciousness and the Truth, — who is Purusha, — if he meets the woman of the right type — the woman who is his Shakti — then his spiritual life, the life which he is to manifest, is enriched and becomes full. In this case also there is the psychic union between the two.

In the case of those who have the psychic union of the proper kind to start with, the spiritual relation may gradually develop and manifest itself.

In the spiritual union, the woman who is the Shakti must be really a Power — that is to say, a powerful personality who can receive the help from the Purusha in the proper way. Each must be of real help to the other: this relation is the most difficult to attain. These difficulties come to the sadhak; to the Siddha, the perfected soul, there is no difficulty. He knows fully well what is to be manifested. If his Shakti is there he knows where she is and he will get her.

Disciple: Is the Shakti necessary for the Supramental Yoga?

Sri Aurobindo: The Shakti is not necessary for the Yoga: without the Shakti full knowledge, consciousness, power and Ananda can be attained. But if these elements are to be brought to and manifested in life then the Shakti is necessary. If there is no Shakti then he cannot bring down the knowledge, power, Ananda, etc. that are in him into life. He can, in that case, only prepare the way for the work to be done at a future time.

Disciple: Suppose a person aspiring for spiritual life marries, what would happen to him?

Sri Aurobindo: If such a man marries, three things might happen:

1. If it is an ordinary marriage he may be pulled down to the lower level of consciousness, apart from the cares, anxieties and responsibilities he may be burdened with. In that case he may lose his aspiration for the higher life and may be completely changed on account of the woman's influence on him.

2. He may be spiritually ruined altogether by the marriage.

3. Or, if he gets the woman of the right type it may be a great help to him.

You can write to D that Sri Aurobindo does not believe in marriage as it exists at present in society and as an institution. He does not ask a person to marry or not to marry; it is left entirely to the person concerned.

For a person who aspires for some kind of higher life it is common, especially for those who have a strong vital being, to have a tendency for vital enjoyment, and vital relation with a woman. Sri Aurobindo has no objection to this as an experience and perception. Only, in a yogi's life these have to be transformed into the movements of the Higher Nature.

*

21 JANUARY 1925

A letter from A was received. He wanted the following points to be answered:

1. The distinction between the Higher Knowledge and mental or intellectual knowledge.
2. The distinction between mental will and the higher Tapas-Shakti.
3. Ramakrishna says that one who wants God must give up everything for him. Should he follow this idea?

Sri Aurobindo: As to the first point you write to him that it is the Higher Knowledge — its Jyoti — which illumines the mind. The distinction between mental will and the higher Tapas-Shakti he cannot know at present as he has not been given the Yoga which is practised here. For doing this Yoga he has to decide finally what he intends to do when he goes out of jail. He may have to leave off his external activities. But that he must decide by referring to his inner being.

As to leaving everything for God, I do not know what

Ramakrishna may have meant. But I want him to understand that he ought not to decide by what Ramakrishna said, or what I say, but by what he feels within his own being, in the inmost depth of his being.

What I feel is that A has mental ideas about spiritual things but does not seem to have turned his inner eye within himself. I do not want to call him away from the true demand of his inner being.

Disciple: A has been doing political work as you know. So, the question from him would be: What is the connection between Yoga and political work?

Sri Aurobindo: The present-day political activity is intensely Rajasic in its nature and its reconciliation with Yoga is not easy. In fact, all those who took to this Yoga had to give up political activity.

Disciple: Why should it be so? There is acceptance of life in this Yoga, is there not?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, there is no rejection of life; you can say, life is accepted in this Yoga. But we regard the inner life as more important, the outer only as an expression, a form, of it.

Disciple: Can one not take up the outer action — say, political — in the Yoga?

Sri Aurobindo: External action can also be taken up in this Yoga but it must be in keeping with the inner life. The outside world regards all those who do this Yoga here as 'lost' to all work. But that is not the correct reading. It is not that we have no sympathy with the political aspirations of the country; only, we can't go into them in the Rajasic way.

We leave it to the Higher Power to do what She likes.

Disciple: But you yourself did political work.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, I did it but it was done in the attitude I just now described — i.e. by leaving the work in the hands of the Higher Power.

Disciple: Suppose India accepts the Truth which the Yoga wants to bring down into life?

Sri Aurobindo: If the Truth which the Yoga wants to achieve is attained and if India accepts it, then it will give quite a new turn to Indian politics — different from European politics. It would be a profound change.

But that is a question which A will have to decide afterwards. For the present, A must find out why he wants the Yoga, whether he has a call — a true call. And the second question is whether he has the capacity. I do not know about his capacity but he requires, I believe, a long preparation.

*

15 SEPTEMBER 1925

Some questions were put to Sri Aurobindo about a sadhak in Chittagong who wanted to give Sadhana-initiation into Yoga to others.

Sri Aurobindo: X was never a great sadhak and he is not fit to give initiation.

1. He had some possibilities which were destroyed because of his vanity. He thought that he was a great sadhak and tried to pose as such.

2. He was self-willed and never used to pay attention to the instructions sent to him from Pondicherry. He had one idea in his mind: that everything that was coming to him was from Shakti or Kali, though he was repeatedly warned against it.

3. He could not distinguish between what was true and what came to him from the vital and the lower world.

4. At present he is completely under the control of vital

suggestions and hallucinations with the erotic impulse behind them and all his saying that he is doing what I tell him and that "my concentration helps him" is false. It is the explanation given by those lower powers to justify their ways to him.

This Yoga is not a Tantric Yoga and so I can't do anything about the process he follows. There are things in the vital world which are both true and false and the sadhak of this path has to distinguish between them. The Vital is a world full of lustre and colour and hallucination which try to ape the Supramental movements. As I said the other day, it cinematographs the higher movements. It is also full of power.

If he wants to do this Yoga he must begin again; make his mind and vital being calm, give up all the movements of the ego and aspire for the Truth and nothing but the Truth.

Instead of trying to push ahead in Sadhana, it is better to give time to the preparation for Yoga which is the preliminary purification of the Adhar — the nature-mould.

(*There was silence for some time*)

It seems evident that X must have done some Sadhana in his previous life and must have acquired some powers then. He must have repressed his impulses and so they are having their satisfaction now.

Disciple: Was he brilliant before he began Yoga?

Sri Aurobindo: No. But after beginning it he showed mental capacity. Evidently, something opened up in him and his physical mind was not able to bear it. He might have been trying to set things right but when the uprush came he could not distinguish between the higher and the lower movements.

A letter from Y (who was also in Chittagong), was read, containing "an analysis of Yoga".

Sri Aurobindo: It is not all nonsense, though he has put the things pell-mell. It is very difficult to practise this Yoga if the outer instruments are not prepared to express the inner being. There are people who get something in their psychic being and immediately it tries to force its way out. But the outer members are not able to bear it and the whole thing breaks up.

Disciple: What will become of Y in his next life, — will his madness follow him?

Sri Aurobindo: He will have to work it out. The madness is working out sufficiently rapidly, so that he may begin next time with a better instrument.

Disciple: Would it be better, if he stopped these things?

Sri Aurobindo: In most people it is not the central being that finds expression. It is some minor personality which serves for the temporary purposes of life. The true central being is always behind.

Disciple: Can the central being never come up without Yoga?

Sri Aurobindo: Very few can know and express their central being without Yoga.

The vital appears brilliant and imitates the rapidity of the higher movement and creates false reflections of the Truth and can try to mislead the sadhak.

Disciple: Can it imitate the calm of the Supermind?

Sri Aurobindo: Oh yes. There are Asuric forces that are very calm. Do you think that the Asura is a fool? Sometimes, Tapasya is his chief weapon. Hiranyakashipu and Ravana were great Tapaswins. Doing good to humanity is one of the favourite weapons of the Asura. Of course, he seeks to do it in his own Asuric way. The Asuric Maya can take up any garb — even the pursuit of an ideal or sacrifice for some principle!

*

4 OCTOBER 1925

A letter from X's husband which raised certain general questions about the relation of man and woman in this Yoga. He wanted to exercise the conjugal right with his wife. Both had written to Sri Aurobindo separately for guidance.

The husband's argument: "Sri Aurobindo's Yoga is not a yoga of renunciation and even if renunciation was to be carried out I shall carry it out gradually. I am not able to control myself. I want to know: What is the relation between man and woman in this Yoga?"

Sri Aurobindo dictated the following by way of reply:

This is not a yoga of renunciation in the sense that one has to reject life or the world externally. But that does not mean that one has to give room to lower forces and allow them full play in their lower forms.

This is a Yoga of rising into the divine nature from the lower nature. What that higher nature is you will understand afterwards. You have to become fit for it. You can now see your lower nature, especially the vital play of Kama (lust) and Krodha (anger) etc., is essentially the functioning of the animal-man. You have to rise into the divine nature by rejecting the lower nature. How can you get the divine nature unless you conquer the nature of the animal-man in you? The first step has been given to you: you must learn to separate yourself as the Purusha, and look unmoved at all the play of Nature in you. You must externalise the play and see all its actions as outside yourself. You ought not to allow any mental justification for the play of the lower forces of the vital being. The Shuddhi — purification — necessary in this Yoga cannot be attained with the forces of lust and anger and there is no question of harbouring them.

(*After a pause*) In this matter, you must resort to simple thinking and simple action, leaving all mental complications and Shastric injunctions. You must not allow the intellect to play with them. Your ideas about Shastric injunctions are nothing else but justifications. Really it is the lower play of the vital being. In this rejection of the lower nature you ought to be ever alert, vigilant.

The ideal relation between man and woman in this Yoga you cannot at present understand. You have, first, to make yourself fit for it. Your own ideas of married life and Shastra etc., are dangerous and if you follow these ideas there is every chance of your fall from the Yoga. All of them are mental constructions. The first thing in a case where both man and woman are aspirants is to help each other in Sadhana. They must exchange their forces and help each other to rise into the Higher Consciousness.

Secondly, there is the question of love. What most people call 'love' is a superficial thing and mostly bound up with the vital craving of lust. That has to be completely rejected.

There is a relation deeper than that — it is of the soul. That relation comes from within by itself. It manifests itself in both as an ideal oneness — oneness in mind, oneness of the soul, oneness of self. That relation is Shanta, full of peace, wide, pure — Pavitra. In it there is no trace of vital lust and physical craving. There is also possible a relation of Purusha and Shakti between man and woman. But that relation is not social, it is not ordinary. Because one is married to a certain woman it does not follow that his wife is necessarily his Shakti.

So long as these relations are not understood and experienced by you another possible relation is that of friends. That is to say, you ought to live with your wife just as you would with a friend who has the same aim of life, without any other relation than that of friendship.

You must remove the misunderstanding from your mind about

your wife that she does not love you, etc. She has an aspiration for the Yoga and therefore she wants to reject all the lower play of nature from herself and from you. You ought not to press her or induce her to fall from the path of Yoga. If you can't control yourself you should live separately and fight your nature.

You write about passivity and activity: you have to understand and know what they are. When one begins Yoga, naturally, all the forces on the mental, and especially on the vital plane, that are hostile to the Siddhi of this Yoga, are bound to rise and one must be active in rejecting them — what the Gita calls *apramatta* — because the Purusha is not only *sākṣī* but *anumantā*, one who gives consent. This activity of rejection must be always there. Even if you fall you must rise up again and again and fight.

Passivity merely means a calm inactive attitude of mind keeping it open to the higher influence and ready to accept the light, power, knowledge, Ananda that come from Above. It must be a prayerful mood so that the knowledge may come down. When the higher knowledge comes one ought not to allow the mind to get active with it, but must allow that knowledge to come more and more by keeping the mind passive.

Both passivity and activity are legitimate movements of this Yoga in the beginning. The highest, the true passivity will, of course, come afterwards. If you remain passive now, you will open yourself to all sorts of influences and accept all kinds of suggestions, ideas, etc., coming from outside, from the universal Nature. You will mistake them for those coming from the Higher Power.

*

7 OCTOBER 1925

Two letters containing some questions about Sadhana were received.

Sri Aurobindo: It is no use X trying to have the current of force at present. The Supramental Yoga is out of his reach at present. He seems to be puzzled as to what is 'life' and what is action. It does not mean only marriage and earning. He does not understand that Karma Yoga does not require any vast field. It is not necessary to become a prime minister or a millionaire to do Karma Yoga.

He speaks of Raja Yoga, — but in Raja Yoga also a certain purification of nature is required which is done by Yama and Niyama before the aspirant can succeed in meditation and attain Samadhi.

In this Yoga also something similar is to be done, though in a different manner. He has, first, to try to understand *his own* nature and get rid of egoistic motives from his actions and of desires from the vital being. He must try to acquire Samata and Sattwic balance. That is to say, he should reject lower motives and learn to act from higher motives and with a Sattwic temperament. All our actions proceed from a certain inner attitude and he has to see whether he can change the motive of desire for a higher one.

He can read the first few chapters of the *Essays on the Gita* and try to understand Karma Yoga. Some sort of Karma Yoga is the best preparation for this Yoga. He cannot get the current of the Higher Power now; he must make himself fit for the Higher Power. The real Shakti cannot come unless the Adhar is purified. She *can* force the way, but in that case there will be all confusion and the Adhar may break.

*

9 OCTOBER 1925

In a letter the question raised was: "Is not all action incompatible with Sri Aurobindo's Yoga?"

Sri Aurobindo: His idea that all action is incompatible with this Yoga is not correct. Generally, it is found that all Rajasic activity does not go well with this Yoga; for instance, political work. The reasons for abstaining from political activity are:

1. Being Rajasic in its nature, it does not allow that quiet and knowledge on the basis of which the work should really proceed.

All action requires a certain inner formation, an inner detached being. The formation of this inner being requires one to dive into the depth of the being, get to the true Being and then prepare the true Being to come to the surface. It is then that one acquires a poise — an inner poise — and can act from there. Political work by Rajasic activity which draws the being outwards prevents this inner formation.

2. The political field, together with certain other fields, is the stronghold of the Asuric forces. They have their eye on this Yoga, and they would try to hamper the Sadhana by every means. By taking to the political field you get into a plane where these forces hold the field. The possibility of attack in that field is much greater than in others. These Asuric forces try to lead away the sadhak from the path by increasing Kama and Krodha, and such other Rajasic impulses. They may throw him permanently into the sea of Rajasic activity.

He asks about the synthesis between Sadhana and action. In this Yoga such a synthesis is not necessary in the beginning. The sadhak in general, opens himself alternately to the Higher Power and to the ordinary life. It goes on like that for a long time. Then comes a time when the two powers oppose each other and then the need for synthesis arises.

But if the difficulty is only intellectual then it need not be solved now. In this Yoga intellect is not the chief instrument, — experience is primary. Of course, there is the intellectual side of Yoga which the mind of the sadhak must grasp as it would be helpful to him. But it is the experience which is the most important thing.

*

12 OCTOBER 1925

In a letter from Allahabad a question was asked: "Do you find that you are more energetic after practising Yoga than you were when you appeared for the I.C.S. examination?"

Sri Aurobindo turning to a disciple, asked the same question in a general form.

Disciple: I find that my experience is, perhaps, not encouraging.

Sri Aurobindo: Does it mean that you are less energetic now than before you began Sadhana?

(*Turning to another disciple*) What do you say?

Disciple: I find that it is not possible to put forth energy in the old way.

Sri Aurobindo: My experience is quite the reverse. I feel ten times more energetic than I was before Yoga.

Disciple: Are there times in Sadhana when one finds the energy flagging?

Sri Aurobindo: That is due to Tamas. The question is not of Tamas coming up. Even if Tamas came, why should the energy be absent?

Disciple: There are times when one can't put forth energy as one used to do.

Sri Aurobindo: That may be temporary.

Disciple: Did you find in your case a steady increase of energy with the practice of Yoga?

Sri Aurobindo: No, not steady. I was more energetic when I was working in politics than I had been before; when I took up Yoga I was more energetic than I had been in politics.

Disciple: There are times when one cannot do work that is expected of one.

Sri Aurobindo: Of course, one can't do what others demand of one. The question is whether you have the energy, never mind in what way it is put forth. For instance, in that house just before I began the *Arya* there was a period of six months in which there was a continual spiritual experience and I could not do any writing at that time. But that does not mean I was less energetic.

I could not have written the 64 pages of the *Arya* before without flagging. I give another instance: now I do not find it possible to make speeches as before. If I am asked to make speeches I would find myself very unenergetic.

Disciple: But you are making a speech once in the year!

Sri Aurobindo: That is not a speech! And even that I am doing because X expects me to speak.

Disciple: So you are doing it under compulsion!

Sri Aurobindo: Almost! I would prefer to be silent!

Disciple: We know that; this time we have to thank Y.

Sri Aurobindo: Oh! I see, because he gave the points.

Disciple: I want to ask you one question: Is Instinct higher than Reason?

Sri Aurobindo: In what sense?

Disciple: In the sense that it is pure, that is, unmixed, direct, and automatic.

Sri Aurobindo: It is true within certain limits. The animal instinct is limited to a particular purpose. It is something ingrained in the being, something that is handed down to a particular species.

Disciple: There is a report on the behaviour of rats, in an American publication. It describes how the rats attacked a hanging basket full of eggs, formed a chain to drop them down, and how they carried away all the eggs.

Sri Aurobindo: This may shock some people — but the ordinary idea about the animal is, of course, absurd. They are much nearer to man than is generally supposed.

Disciple: I was asking about this kind of instinct.

Sri Aurobindo: It is not 'instinct' at all, it is intelligence.

Disciple: But the animals have no intelligence.

Sri Aurobindo: What do you mean? They have as much intelligence as men have. The behaviour and action of the rats just now described is a work of intelligence.

I told you, perhaps, how once I saw a spider. He wanted to balance his cobweb against some weight in order to support it. He put a blade of grass first, but found it was not heavy enough. So he went down and brought a small piece of gravel and with it balanced the web. Now, you can't call this instinct. It is intelligence. What we *can* say is that the animals have not got a developed mind. We can call this intelligence, vital intelligence or vital mind. It works very correctly within limits. But if you take the animal out of the field, in which its instinct is unerring, you will find that it stumbles even more than the rational mind.

The reason why the animal mind thinks correctly is that the animals have not got the struggle between the vital and the mental being that man has got.

*

21 OCTOBER 1925

The talk turned on the content of a letter by a sadhika who said in her letter that her husband was trying to justify the lower sexual impulse by quoting Shastra and also by saying that Sadhana ought to be done through Bhoga — enjoyment. He also complained that Sri Aurobindo's Yoga was more rigorous than even the path of Sannyas. He argued: "What is the use of a relation between man and woman if there is no sexual enjoyment?"

Sri Aurobindo: Tell her that the true relation between man and woman cannot be understood by them. They must advance a great deal before they can understand it. It is no use trying to understand it intellectually.

She must go on with her own Sadhana without caring to lift her husband. If he has something genuine in him he will come up. Everything depends upon him so far as he is concerned. He has something in him which is turned to Yoga but his vital being requires great purification. He has been given quite elementary practice. He has been asked to watch his nature as the Purusha and to reject the play of the lower nature. He can also seek help from Above. The element in his vital nature trying to justify the lower impulses by reasons and arguments is very dangerous.

*

2 NOVEMBER 1925

A letter from a gentleman putting questions about the i and the *paramātmā* and their relation and also about the experience of the Supermind.

Sri Aurobindo (*with a smile*)**:** You can ask him to read all the issues of the *Arya* where he will find solutions for all his questions.

Disciple: But he may say he does not know English!

Sri Aurobindo: Then he can wait till he has learnt it! (*Laughter*)

There was talk about the translation in Marathi of *The Yoga and Its Objects*. Sri Aurobindo was told some details about it.

Sri Aurobindo: I have no objection to my books being translated if they are written by people who know how to write.

Disciple: Unfortunately your books are like no-man's-land. This writer believes the refrain or burden of the book to be "Yoga is for humanity".

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, I think many people would be sorely disappointed if they came to know that I had already outgrown that 'humanity' stage. It is one of the great illusions.

Disciple: But, then, would nothing be done for humanity?

Disciple: He says it is a big illusion, don't you see?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, it is one of the most powerful Sattwic illusions which people have. It has a very great hold.

Disciple: Do you mean to say that nothing can be done for humanity?

Sri Aurobindo: Why should anything be done?

Disciple (*to another*)**:** Do you feel left out as one of humanity? (*Laughter*)

Disciple: You are not outside the pale of humanity!

Sri Aurobindo: It is not the question whether one can do anything for humanity. The question is whether anything can be done. The difficulty is that people expect humanity to change by some sort of miracle into something which is not humanity.

Disciple: Not by a miracle.

Sri Aurobindo: Wouldn't you think it a miracle if all the 1500 or more millions of people that are living on the earth could be changed into something that is superhumanity?

Disciple: It would be a miracle, if it could be done.

Sri Aurobindo: Imagine the whole of humanity from Bernard Shaw to the maid servant being changed into something which is not humanity.

Disciple: But, then, do you think that humanity is not moving at all and that there has been no evolution up till now?

Sri Aurobindo: I don't say that. Humanity is moving itself. The only difficulty is that it has a tendency to come back to its starting point again and again! (*Laughter*)

Disciple: Suppose this time we succeed in the Yoga and the Supermind comes down into the physical; I do not expect it in one day but in course of time.

Sri Aurobindo: You mean Kalpas — cycles of ages — afterwards? Even then, do you suppose that the whole human race will be transformed suddenly into the Supramental race ?

Disciple: In that case nothing can be done for humanity. One can only write books for humanity.

Sri Aurobindo: I don't say that nothing is, or can be, done for humanity. What I say is that there is nothing radically altered, no fundamental change in humanity, in spite of all that has been done.

Time after time something comes down from Above, but again you find humanity the same as ever. Look at Christianity, all the millions in Europe who profess it. Do you think they believe in Christianity? Not even ten percent try to live out Christianity. That is the difficulty with humanity. Something comes down from Above. In order to make it available to the whole community you have to give it such a form as to make it suitable to all capacities and in that change the Truth gets mixed with their falsehood — so much so that it no longer remains what it was. Buddha came and tried and did not succeed, and I think any such effort would not succeed.

Disciple: Anatole France seems to hold that humanity is what it is and is going to be what it is. Perfection may come to man but humanity will remain what it is. True perfection is possible but it would be in something that is different from man.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, you can give a religion or create a sect and be a prophet or something of the kind. But nothing will be really done.

Disciple: But when the Supermind comes down do you think that there would be no connection between man and Superman?

Sri Aurobindo: I don't say there would be no connection. There is no reason why there would be no relation.

Disciple: But we want also to change human nature.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, but, as is now admitted, such a radical change cannot be done in the human being. We can also call man the 'mental being', though it is a compliment which the average man does not deserve as he is hardly a 'mental being'. All the same we can say 'human consciousness' or 'the mental consciousness'. As a radical change in this mental consciousness cannot be brought about by the mind, we want to change it by something which is not mind, we call it Supermind. As man is removed from the animal, so would be the Superman from man.

Disciple: Would the Superman be as far from man as man from the monkey?

Sri Aurobindo: What do you mean by 'monkey'?

Disciple: The stage of consciousness before man evolved.

Sri Aurobindo: That does not seem to be the accepted theory now. They say that the monkey and ourselves are cousins. All the same I should like to think that man would be nearer to Superman than the animal is to man.

Disciple: It would mean that Supermind would work for humanity.

Sri Aurobindo: It is not exactly for humanity, it is for something which is more than humanity. It is bringing about a change from humanity to super-humanity. Of course, that change is to come in, and from, humanity, it is not to drop from heaven. But it would create something quite different from man.

Disciple: Would not such a change require a change in man's physical form?

Sri Aurobindo: I can't say. But I can say this that it would necessitate a change in the physical functions; they would have all to be transformed. Otherwise, this stupid body of man would be incapable of holding the Supramental Power.

Disciple: Yes, it is always constipated! (*Laughter*)

Then two questions were raised: 1. The nature of the Supramentalised body. 2. The nature of the economic organisation in the life of Supermen.

Sri Aurobindo: In the Supramental economic organisation you would not expect X to go and fish on the pier at Pondicherry. (*Laughter*)

This question about the nature of the Supramental body was answered by Théon. He was in France at that time. He said the Supramental body would be a 'body of light' — *corps glorieux.* He had a number of disciples some of whom were mathematicians and scientists. One of them brought the solution one day that the body of the superman would be a sphere! Théon said: "It may be, but it would be very inconvenient if people want to kiss each other!" (*Laughter*)

Disciple: Jokes apart, I want to know whether the human body would not cast its imperfection on the manifestation of the Spirit. Would not the Supermind require another form?

Sri Aurobindo: Another physical form may not be required.

What I can say, at present, is that all the physical functions would have to be transformed. The present physical body is 'stupid' compared to what is required of it for Supramentalisation.

*

26 DECEMBER 1925

There was a letter from a sadhak at Chittagong describing his experience and asking for guidance.

Sri Aurobindo: You can write to him that the idea prevalent, but mistaken, at Chittagong is that Yoga means seeing visions and that it is something mysterious and miraculous, or receiving suggestions. This is a great mistake. The aim of Yoga is not seeing visions but to change the consciousness.

There are many kinds of visions. Some visions are only images, some are forms taken by our vital desires, or they are images of mental thoughts. Often they are our own creations; they do not correspond to any Truth. True visions are very rare and they can't be completely understood unless one has the right discernment and great purity in the being. I would like all people interested in our Yoga to understand this thing. Such visions as they have been seeing obviously show that they are creations of their vital desires that have taken form. Such visions have no value whatever from the point of view of Sadhana. In Yoga one has to be prepared for dry work which is very necessary: the purification of the entire being and then the discipline of self-mastery and self-control. He must reject those false visions. He must aspire for some more solid things.

There was reference made to Sri Aurobindo about the marriage of a disciples sister.

Sri Aurobindo: It seems she wants to marry; in that case it is no use trying to restrain her artificially, or trying to foist Sadhana on her when she is not willing. Let her choose out of the three proposals. About Yoga, if she has a call, a deep call, it will last and assert itself. It can never be lost. On the contrary, an artificial demand for Sadhana created by external pressure may be very bad for her. It may not last and would easily give way before the demands of the ordinary life and its impulses.

There was nothing of general interest during the interval. Some events may be noted:

1. A wire from Krishnashashi was received, informing Sri Aurobindo that he was dead. It was sent under the name 'Jyoti'. This wire was contradicted by Mohini from Chittagong.

2. A disciple from Madras sent a copy of the *Theosophist*. It contained lectures and the latest declaration by Mrs. Besant about Krishnamurty's avatarhood and the descent of the world-teacher in him.

Disciple: Did you read the *Theosophist?*

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, I made an unsuccessful effort. What she used to write before was readable and had some power. But this is rather hopeless.

Disciple: Did you read the book containing the account of so many past lives?

Sri Aurobindo: I know those visions. They are just what our Chittagong people are getting, they are full of imaginations. They are not visions that come to one, but those which one creates for oneself by pressure. One man told me that I have to close my eyes and begin to imagine I am in another's body and I shall be at once in that plane. I tried it once and saw it is very easy. You can construct the history of the world from the remotest past without much difficulty.

Disciple: Do these people do any Sadhana?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, in their own way. But if a descent of a great Truth is to take place there must be a very solid preparation to hold it. That is a more important work than holding up somebody as the Avatar.

*

22 FEBRUARY 1926

A letter from Subhas Chandra Bose to Dilip Kumar Roy that appeared in the *Prabartak* of Chandernagore was read out. Subhas remarked in it that though he had great respect for Vivekananda he considered Sri Aurobindo more *gabhīr* — deeper — than the former. He accepted Sri Aurobindo as a genius and a great Dhyani, but thought that too long remaining away from 'active life' tends to onesided development and may help some few to become Supermen, but for the generality of men he would prefer the path of service and work.

Sri Aurobindo heard the contents of the letter and was glad that it was short.

Sri Aurobindo: I met X today and he told me that Madame Y who is a Theosophist and has some experiences in Yoga on the mental level is coming to India from France. She has an idea of regenerating India by settling some spiritually-minded Europeans in India.

She has got an illusion of work and many Europeans have got the same. They think that they can do spiritual work; with their ideas they come to India and get lost in the ocean that is India and fail to achieve anything substantial. They don't make any impression and even if something is done it is lost out of recognition after some time — you can't recognise what it was.

For ordinary men work is, of course, necessary, but one who wants to do 'divine work' must prepare himself. He must learn to be 'an instrument' first. All these Europeans have to learn that the work they take up is only a preparation for the divine work. They must know that it is not any mentally constructed work to which they must obstinately stick, if they want to be the instruments of God.

For instance, all these tall ideas like Madame Y's about regenerating India and taking up big schemes and being regarded as big workers and saviours have got a fascination. One who wants to do the divine work must learn to forget the difference between important and unimportant work, small work and great work, till the work that is intended is found by him.

Disciple: She would profit spiritually only if she learnt from her work and her experience. India has got her own Dharma and work for her has to be done in keeping with her Dharma.

Sri Aurobindo: She has another mania: getting inspiration for her work. I explained to X that it is not inspiration that comes always. You can drag down what your mind has chosen; your desire or your own idea, your impulse or even your own mental preference can reflect itself like that, and appear to you as coming from Above. One who wants to do divine works must first attain spiritual perfection. If one is sincere then generally he profits by such work. For instance, such a man will submit his inspiration to the test of hard physical experience. If it is found true there then it is true. But if the inspiration fails to come true in life then one can set himself on the right path if one is sincere. But what people generally do is that if the inspiration fails they get another and then another explaining away each one to themselves.

There are people who follow up their intuition or inspiration and turn out solid work like J. C. Bose.

Disciple: At the time of the non-cooperation Dr. P. C. Ray came

forward enthusiastically and joined the movement. But J. C. Bose said that if he was to do service to India he could only do it through his scientific work.

Some medical students left their studies, went to work in the villages and came back within a short time shorn of all emotional enthusiasm.

Sri Aurobindo: What do they mean by village organisation? Have they any idea? They always cite the example of Russia, but they don't know how the Russians worked.

If you want to work in the villages you must leave off all idea that it will be done very soon. It is a very laborious work. It can't be done by lecturing. Political agitation has its law and solid work has its own law. Our people mix up the two things. Political agitation requires you to put up a new idea before the public; then you go on hammering out that idea, wait till it catches the publics imagination and gets connected with its vital interest. Then you wait for the psychological moment when you can get to your objective. It is useful in a nations life.

But solid work is quite different. In Russia the workers settled in villages, some as doctors, some as teachers doing their work and trying to raise the life there, bringing new light and new awakening. It is to be done slowly. The idea that somehow it will get done in a year or two — like "Swaraj in one year" — is all egoistic ignorance. Solid work is to be done under the law of the physical plane. The Russians waited patiently for years together and then their organisation got slowly recognised by the Government and then after a long wait came the Revolution.

How do you expect villagers to trust every young irresponsible man who claims to do good to them? If you go on working for years then you may get into their confidence and may be able to achieve something. All these ideas of theatrical success and lightning flash-like work are most impracticable. You have to stick on to your work

through all difficulties. It requires patience.

Disciple: At Sajod, in Broach District of Gujarat, educated young men have gone and settled in the village and after nearly 15 years they are able to inspire confidence in the villagers about their work.

Sri Aurobindo: That is the only way if one wants to work in the villages. Then only a new life can gradually grow in them. They can then combine into organised units.

*

23 MARCH 1926

K had written a letter to S containing an account of his Sadhana after receiving Sri Aurobindo's last letter and sent some questions to be answered by Sri Aurobindo to which no reply was sent for many days. Whenever Sri Aurobindo was reminded he said, "I am not inclined to lecture on the psychic being."

Today he inquired whether there were any important letters unanswered. He was told about K's letter.

Sri Aurobindo: Do you want me to lecture on the psychic being?
Disciple: Some general hints may be given, if you like.

Sri Aurobindo: Firstly, when the psychic awakens you grow conscious of your own soul, you know your true being. You no longer commit the mistake of identifying yourself with the mental or the vital being, you do not mistake them for the soul.

Secondly, when it is awakened, the psychic being gives the sadhak the true Bhakti for God or for the Guru. That devotion is quite different from mental and vital devotion.

In the mind one may have admiration for the intellectual ideas of someone, or one may have mental appreciation for some great intellect. But if it is merely mental, it does not carry matters very far;

it is not sufficient by itself. It does not open the whole of the inner being; it only establishes a mental contact. Of course, there is no harm in having that. When K came here he had that mental admiration for what I have written in the *Arya.* One can get something from that kind of mental contact, but it is not what one can get by being in relation with the psychic being. I do not, for a moment, want to suggest that there was no truth in his Bhakti, but there was much mixture in it and even what was mental and vital was very much exaggerated.

When he began the Yoga he had certain capacities. Of course, he was not half as tall as he thought himself to be. But if he had not exaggerated his capacities he would have been, by this time, farther than he is today.

The vital devotion demands and demands. It imposes its own conditions. It says to God: "You are so great, therefore I worship you; and now satisfy this desire and that condition of mine; make me great; make me a great sadhak, a great Yogin, etc." It does not use this language of course, but that is what is behind it. It assumes many justifying forms and comes to the sadhak in various ways.

The unillumined mind also surrenders to the Truth but it makes its own conditions. It says to the Truth: "Satisfy my judgment and my opinions." It demands that the Truth should cast itself in mental forms. The vital being insists that the Truth should throw itself into its own movement of force. The vital being pulls at the Higher Power; it pulls at the vital being of the Guru. Both the mind and the vital beings have got an *arrière pensée* — a mental reservation in their surrender.

But the psychic Bhakti is not like that. Because the soul is in contact with the Divinity behind, it is capable of true Bhakti. The psychic being has what is called *ahaitukī bhakti*, devotion without any motive. It does not make any demands, it makes no reservations in its surrender.

The psychic being knows how to obey the Truth in the right way. It can give itself up fully to God or to the Guru; and because it gives itself up truly it receives also truly.

When the psychic being comes to the surface it feels sad when the mental or the vital being is making a fool of itself. That sadness is purity offended. When the mind is playing its own game, or when the vital being is carried away by its impulses, it is the psychic being which says: "I do not want these things; what am I here for, after all? I am here for the Truth and not for these things." Psychic sadness is again different from mental dissatisfaction or vital sadness or physical depression.

If the psychic being is strong it makes itself felt in the mental and the vital beings, and forces them to change. But if it is weak, the mental and the vital take advantage of its sadness and use it even to their own advantage. A weak psychic being is often an affliction.

Take the case of X. He has a well-developed intellectual being; but his vital is often quite different in its character. At times the psychic being in his case used to force itself to the surface and throw everything into disorder. In Y's case it was the vital being that dictated to the psychic being. To the protests of the psychic being the vital says: "Yes, yes, what you say is all right, but I am also right and what I do is right and necessary."

When the psychic being is weak it casts only an influence occasionally and then retires into the background.

Disciple: But you said just now that the psychic being knows everything and is in communication with the Truth; then why should it be weak? Why can it not force the other parts of nature to obey it?

Sri Aurobindo: If the psychic being is not fully awake, it does not come to the surface. It is very much behind in most people, and when it cannot come fully to the surface I call it 'weak', not that the psychic being itself is weak. It has got everything in it, but when it

can't bring it forward it is called weak.

Disciple: Is the psychic being the same as what is called Atman?

Sri Aurobindo: The Atman generally means what you imply in English by the word Spirit. It is self-existent, conscious, the *ānandamaya* Being, the Purusha. The Atman is the same in all; it is that which is behind all the manifestation of Nature.

Disciple: Has it any features?

Sri Aurobindo: It has no features. The only thing that can be said about it is: Sat, Chit, Ananda.

Disciple: Does it indicate the passive or the active state of the Being?

Sri Aurobindo: Generally it is used to imply the passive state, but sometimes it is used for both. The psychic being is not the same as the Atman. It is what corresponds to the European idea of 'soul'. The Western occultists recognise, at least they used to recognise, three things: Spirit, soul, body. The Spirit corresponds to the Atman, and the soul to the psychic being. It is the Purusha *hṛdguhāyām* — the soul in the cave of the heart.

Disciple: Is the *aṇguṣṭha mātraḥ puruṣaḥ*, spoken of in the Upanishad the same as the psychic being?

Sri Aurobindo: It may be. I think the psychic being was meant by the phrase, *iśvaraḥ sarvabhūtānām hṛddeśe* — the Lord seated in the heart of creatures.

Disciple: Is not the psychic being the direct portion of the Divine here? If so, is it the same as the Jiva?

Sri Aurobindo: The Jiva is something more than the psychic being. The psychic being is behind the heart; while the Jiva is high above, connected with the Central Being. It is that which on every level of consciousness becomes the Purusha, the Prakriti and the personalities of Nature. The psychic being, one may say, is the soul-personality. The psychic being most purely reflects the Divine in the

lower triplicity of mind, life and body. There are four higher levels: Sat, Chit, Ananda and Vijnana; they are in Knowledge, while below in the three levels — mind, life and body — there is a mixture of ignorance and knowledge. The psychic being is behind the mind, life and body; it is most open to the higher Truth; that is why it is indispensable for the manifestation of the Divine.

The psychic being alone can open itself completely to the Truth. This is so because the movements of the lower parts — mind, life and body — are full of defects, errors and mixtures and, however sincere they may be and however hard they may try to transform themselves into movements of the Truth, they cannot do it unless the psychic being comes to their help. Of course, these lower parts have their own sincerity.

When the psychic being awakens it becomes easy for the sadhak to distinguish from within between Truth and falsehood, and also to throw out from the nature any wrong movement.

You may write to K one more point: The psychic being refuses to be deceived by appearances. It is not carried away by falsehood. It refuses to be depressed by falsehood, nor does it exaggerate the truth of what it sees. For example, even if everybody in the world around says: 'There is no God', the psychic being refuses to believe it. It only says: 'I know', and also, 'I know because I feel'.

As I said, the psychic being is behind the emotional being in the heart, and when it is awakened it throws out the dross from the emotional being and makes it free from sentimentalism and the lower play of vital emotions. But that is not the dryness of the mind, nor the exaggeration of the vital feelings, it gives the just touch to each emotion.

Disciple: Could one say that in the planes of consciousness above the mind all is the same — the psychic being and the Atman, etc.?

Sri Aurobindo: If you mean "Everything is One" then it merely

comes to the old Adwaitavada of Shankaracharya. Really speaking, it is not a matter for the mind to decide. It is a matter of experience. In a certain experience you find that "All is One" and Shankara is right. But there are other experiences in which the Vishishtadwaita and even the Dwaita finds justification. Mind only cuts, differentiates, analyses, represents. You can't push these questions too far with the mind, otherwise you bring in the old quarrel of the philosophers. You can't say: "It is that", or "It must be like this", or "It can't be anything else"; for, it may be all these things at the same time. You can't approach the Highest with thought and express it in speech. Of course, you *can* express it, but then you diminish it also.

True knowledge is not attained by thinking. It is what you *are*; it is what you *become*; that is to say, you have the knowledge because you *are* That. That is the reason why I insist on the attainment of the Supermind as the condition for the experience of the highest Truth, because the mind cannot really know it. In the Supermind thoughts convey different aspects of the same Truth, — so different, indeed, that the first aspect is the diametrically opposite of the last — and they are all thrown into the One.

If you have the knowledge by identity you can easily get at my thoughts and my meaning. But I find that the same thing spoken to all carries a different meaning to each.

The subject was continued at lunch-time.

Sri Aurobindo: In the letter you can explain to K what the psychic feelings are. They are not the same as what ordinary men experience as sentiments and feelings. For example, the ordinary sentimental pity is not the same as what is called 'psychic compassion'. The latter is a much deeper compassion than pity. So also 'psychic love' is not the same as what generally passes for love. There is an unselfishness in psychic love; it is always free from all demands — it has no vital claims. Even psychic 'unselfishness,' is not the same as the ordinary unselfishness. There is an

unselfishness which plays on the surface and shows itself off. It becomes philanthropy— *paropakāra.* But the psychic counterpart of it sees the need of the other person and just satisfies it.

Lastly, lest he should think that the psychic being is something weak and inert, let him understand that the presiding Deity — the *adhiṣṭhātṛ devatā* — of the psychic plane is Agni. It is the Divine Fire of aspiration. When the psychic being is awakened the God of the plane is also awakened. And even if the whole being is impure it is this Agni which intervenes, removes the obstacles in the way and consumes all the impurities of the being.

ൟ

21 AUGUST 1926

There was a letter from a political prisoner who argued with a sadhak here about Work and Sadhana. He held that work should be done as sadhana for one could get perfection through work. He quoted the Gita: *yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam* — yoga is cleverness or efficiency in doing action.

Sri Aurobindo: So he thinks that Kaushalam in Karma is Yoga, does he? In that case any clever man, say an expert financier, must be a yogi!

We also thought once when we were doing work that perfection would one day come through 'action' and we found that it was not possible. We had to give up action in that sense. It does not mean that we give up all action. All of us are doing something or the other here. We have to do action as a sort of exercise — not for its own sake, but as a help to the inner growth.

Disciple: What are the limits of such work?

Sri Aurobindo: The limit is that the work ought not to be allowed to interfere with your Yoga. Suppose you take up a work

which leaves no time for Sadhana — you can't take it up. That is to say, a work which demands all your attention and energy whichyou have to do as a Kartavya — something that should be done — that work cannot be undertaken by you.

Then there are works that have got a diferent Dharma; for example, politics. It is on a different plane and you can't do it successfully with this Yoga.

In this Yoga you have to be prepared to cut yourself away from what you consider *your* work and *your* creation, when necessary; you have to be merciless in throwing old things away. That is really the meaning of Nishkama Karma — that you must have no attachment to anything.

Disciple: Does not a stage come when it becomes necessary to give up all action?

Sri Aurobindo: You cannot make a general rule like that. Some may have to give up all action temporarily, — but for others it may not be necessary at all. I myself have been doing work constantly through the *Arya* and other things. And I stopped the *Arya* when I found that I had to put myself out too much, — so to say, externalise too much. The second reason was that I was required to be drawn within myself in order to develop certain experiences, so that the energy might be used for inward work. In a certain sense I can say that I never stopped doing work — even political work.

Disciple: In a sense! In what sense? I want to have some idea about it.

Sri Aurobindo: It is not so difficult as you think; one can put out his force to support certain movements and oppose others.

Disciple: Is that work confined to India?

Sri Aurobindo: It was confined to India in the beginning but now it is not confined to India.

At first I was not very successful, — very often it seemed to

produce no result at all and I found that the work was done afterwards in quite another way than what I had expected or insisted. The same result came but it arrived in another way. The reason, probably, was that I used to put too much vital force with the Power. Of course, the vital is quite essential, but now it is pure and subtle vital force.

Disciple: You did it for what purpose — as something necessary or as an exercise?

Sri Aurobindo: It was shown as something that was to be done. It was not from the Supermind, of course. If it was from there then the full knowledge would be there from the beginning.

I did not know what was going to happen. I simply was shown the thing that was to be done and did it.

Disciple: How did you come to know that a certain thing is to be done?

Sri Aurobindo: Through the Higher Mind.

Disciple: Are there movements or persons, through whom you are working in Indian politics?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. At one time it was X; I even worked through Y for a short time.

Disciple: Did you work upon the course of events of the world war?

Sri Aurobindo: It was so difficult to have sympathy with either side. But it would have been a great disaster if Germany had won.

Disciple: How? Indians wished Germany to win.

Sri Aurobindo: It was merely due to their hatred of the British. When the Germans were marching upon Paris I felt something saying, "They must not take Paris." And as I was consulting a map I almost felt the place where they would be stopped.

It is curious that several things that my mind was hammering at

got done after I had dropped the idea altogether. At one time I had an idea that France must get back Alsace-Lorraine. It was almost an obsession with me and when I had ceased to think about it, the thing got done.

Disciple: Can it be due to the element of desire in the working?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. You must have no desire. There is no question of 'success' also. There is a certain possibility and you have to make an attempt to work it out disinterestedly like a Yogi.

Disciple: What about Russia? It seems to have gone the wrong way.

Sri Aurobindo: How do you mean? It has gone the way that was intended. There is nothing good or bad, or moral or immoral. The question is: "Was it intended ?" It may be accompanied by so many results — good, bad and indifferent. The question is: "What is intended from Above ?"

The experience of humanity would have remained incomplete without the experiment in Russia. Now they have got the form. It depends upon the Russians what they will do with it.

I find it always difficult to work in Indian politics. The difficulty is that the vessels don't hold the Power, they are so weak. If the amount of force that is spent on India were spent on a European nation you would find it full of creative activities of various kinds. But here, in India, it is like sending a current of electricity through a sleeping man. He suddenly starts up, begins jerking and throwing his arms and feet about and then drops down again. He is not fully awake.

Disciple: What is it due to?

Sri Aurobindo: Due to tremendous Tamas. Don't you feel it all around, that Tamas? It is that which frustrates all efforts.

Disciple: What has brought it about?

Sri Aurobindo: It is the result of various causes. It was already

settling — I mean, the forces of disintegration and inertia — before the British came. And after their coming the whole Tamas has settled like a solid block. There must be some awakening before something substantial can be done. Otherwise, India has got very good men; you had Tilak, Das, Vivekananda — none of them an ordinary man and yet you see the Tamas there.

Disciple: Is there any truth in the idea that every great Vibhuti who brings anything new into manifestation builds, first of all, what is called Yogapitha — a seat of Yoga? Each man who goes by his path reaches that Yogapitha and each sadhak has his place there. When once such a Pitha is made then anyone who comes afterwards finds it very easy to reach it because there is a passage already made.

Sri Aurobindo: I can tell you I am building nothing over there. I do not know what is to come. If there is anything in the Supramental I don't know it. You are not always allowed to know it. It is a plane where you find "what is" — there is no necessity to build or construct anything there.

I know some people make such constructions as the Yogapitha and so on. One can always find these things, because many things from the mental plane are always trying to realise themselves here. These constructions are generally on the mental plane and they may even have some truth behind them — not in the forms and constructions themselves. But even where there is some truth behind them it gets mixed up with many other things which sometimes falsifies the truth behind it.

Disciple: Perhaps all sorts of vital forces come and take advantage of it.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. It is for this reason that I am not for rushing into work at once. Such a thing would not be the expression of the Truth. We have to wait till the Truth finds its own expression through us. I myself got the idea of the Supramental after ten years

of Sadhana. The Supramental does not come in the beginning but at the end. It is a progressive Truth.

Disciple: Do you remember a vision Bibhuti-babu once had?

Sri Aurobindo: No.

Disciple: He saw a Yogapuri — a city of Yoga — in which there were different circles of sadhaks round a Guru in the centre of each group. Bibhuti wanted to join the circle but he was not allowed because he had not the password. There were watchmen also.

Sri Aurobindo: It looks more of the vital plane than anything else. There are people who get a symbolic vision and when they see the work not accomplished they generally see it as an unfinished building, or a place where workmen are still working. That does not correspond to any building in the Supramental. That is only a symbolic way of representing the Yoga and its condition and even at that it is not exact but gives only a general idea.

Do you refer to Chandernagore when you speak about the vital forces?

Disciple: Yes.

Sri Aurobindo: At the time I had some construction in my mind. Of course, there was something behind it which I knew to be true. Even then I was not sure that it would work out successfully. Anyway, I wanted to give it a trial and gave that idea to Motilal. Then he took up the idea and, as you know, he took it up with all his vital being and in an egoistic way. So the vital forces found their chance. They tried to take possession of the work and of the workers.

It is after several such lessons that I had to give up the idea of rushing into work. This Yoga is not a cut-out system. It is a growth by experience.

Disciple: Did you ever put your power against it?

Sri Aurobindo: No. I did nothing of the kind. The only thing I

did was to put the Force so that those who were worth anything should be drawn out of it. I have forgotten all about it. In fact, I have long ago put away Chandernagore from my atmosphere. There was nothing of the Supramental there.

♑

27 JANUARY 1939

This evening a very feeling letter written by Vivekananda in 1900 from California to Miss Josephine MacLeod was read to Sri Aurobindo. The relevant points in it are here reproduced.

Alameda, California

18th April 1900

...After all, Joe, I am only the boy who used to listen with rapt wonderment to the wonderful words of Ramakrishna under the Banyan at Dakshineshwar. That is my true nature,... doing good and so forth are all superimpositions. Now I again hear his voice; the same old voice thrilling my soul. Bonds are breaking — love dying, work becoming tasteless — the glamour is off life....

Yes, I come. Nirvana is before me. I feel it at times, the same infinite ocean of peace, without a ripple, a breath.

...Since the beginning of this year, I have not dictated anything in India. You know that.... I am drifting again... in the warm heart of the river! I dare not make a splash with my hands or feet — for fear of breaking the marvellous stillness, stillness that makes you feel sure it is an illusion!

Behind my work was ambition, behind my love was personality, behind my purity was fear, behind my guidance the thirst of power! Now they are vanishing and I drift. I come! Mother... a spectator, no more an actor...

...things are seen and felt like shadows....

Vivekananda

Disciple: The question is: "Is Vivekananda expressing only a passing mood because of his innate preference for Vairagya or was ambition really an element mixed up in his work?" I always felt that there was a double strain in his nature, — he was drawn between work and Sadhana.

Disciple: It is quite understandable that he observed some ambition lurking in his work. I do not think it is only a passing mood. Simultaneously with the Higher Consciousness one can see these things in one's nature.

Sri Aurobindo: These things, like ambition and so on, are not easily removed. They remain in the nature and are difficult to get rid of. Even when the Higher Consciousness comes they can continue with the lower nature.

Disciple: But he says in his writings and speeches that he was conscious of a Higher Power driving him into activity.

Sri Aurobindo: Quite possible; he was conscious of such a Power driving him in spite of his weakness, but that does not mean that his own ambition did not mix with the working of the Power.

Disciple: But later on in his letter he speaks of being freed after death or "freed in the body". That implies that he did not attain liberation till then!

Sri Aurobindo: There are two kinds of liberations: one is when you drop the body, that is to say, you may have attained liberation in consciousness yet something in the nature continues in the old bondage and that ignorance is usually supported by the body-consciousness. When the body drops, the man becomes entirely free or liberated. Another kind of liberation is what is called Jivan Mukti — one realises the liberation even while remaining in the body.

Disciple: But I believe there is a distinction between Videha

Mukti and Jivan Mukti.

Sri Aurobindo: No. Jivan Mukti is the same as Videha Mukti. The example of Janaka is usually given and the current idea is that Jivan Mukti is more difficult to attain than the liberation that is attained either by renunciation or by giving up the body.

Disciple: Souls like Vivekananda come down for a specific work in this world and after doing their work they again ascend to their high status. Is this true?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. There is a plane of liberation from which beings can come down here and perhaps that is what Ramakrishna meant by saying that there are Nitya Mukta souls — souls who are eternally liberated — who can go up and down the ladder of existence.

Disciple: Can they not evolve further on their own plane?

Sri Aurobindo: No.

Disciple: So there is no evolution on the other planes?

Sri Aurobindo: No. On the other planes there are only types and they cannot evolve. If they want to evolve to a condition higher than theirs they must take birth here on earth, that is to say, take a human body. Even the gods are compelled to take human birth if they want to evolve.

Disciple: Why should the gods want to evolve? They must be feeling quite happy in their own state.

Sri Aurobindo: They may get tired of their happiness, and may want something higher, for example, they may want Nirvana.

Disciple: But then they may get tired of Nirvana! (*Laughter*)

Sri Aurobindo: There is no *one* in Nirvana to get tired! A was asking me the same question: "Who has the experience of Nirvana, if there is no *being* in that state ?" The answer is: "Nobody has it. Something in you drops off and Nirvana takes its place." In fact, there is no "getting" but blotting out of "what one is". A was

probably thinking that he would be sitting with his mental personality somewhere looking at Nirvana and saying: "Ah! this is Nirvana!" The reply is: "So long as *you* are there, no Nirvana can be." One has to get rid of all attachments and all personalities before Nirvana can come and that is extremely difficult for one attached to his mental personality like A.

Disciple: If Nirvana is such a negative state, what is the difference between one who has it and one who has not?

Disciple: From the point of view of Nirvana there is no difference ! (*Laughter*)

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. You find the difference because it is *you* who get blotted out in Nirvana and not anybody else.

(*After a pause*) This letter makes at least something precise about Vivekanandas experience because what he speaks of here is the condition of Nirvana accompanied by a sense of illusion of the world.

Disciple: This division of consciousness into two, one feeling fundamentally free and the other imperfect or impure is a very common experience.

Sri Aurobindo: It is not only common, it is the ordinary experience, and in order that one may be able to act without ambition one should be able to take action lightly. That is to say, one should not be perturbed if it is done or not done. It is something like the Gita's "inaction in action" and yet one must act, as the Gita says. The test is that even if the work is taken away or destroyed it must make no difference to the condition of your consciousness.

Disciple: Nirvana is a fundamental spiritual experience, is it not?

Sri Aurobindo: Nirvana, as I know it, is a necessary experience in order to get rid of the nature-personality which is subject to ignorance. You cease to be the small individual ego in a vast world.

You throw away that and become the One in Nirvana.

Nirvana is a passage — for passing into a condition in which your true individuality can be attained. That individuality is not a small, narrow and limited self contained in the world, but is vast and infinite and can contain the world within itself; you can remain in the world and yet be above it, so to say. To get rid of the separative personality in nature Nirvana is a powerful experience.

Disciple: Does one realise oneself as an individual, that is to say, as the true Jiva after Nirvana?

Sri Aurobindo: One realises oneself as the One in all, and also the One as Many and yet that One is also He.

Disciple: That is what you have called "multiple unity".

Sri Aurobindo: Yes.

Disciple: In our Yoga we accept life as real.

Sri Aurobindo: That is to say, you have to give life a place in the Reality.

Disciple: And we are supposed or expected to do everything for you and the Divine Mother. But in our nature we are full of ego and ignorance. So our surrender is also full of ego.

Sri Aurobindo: But you are supposed to make the surrender without the ego-sense. The law is that you should get rid of attachment and desire in your surrender.

Disciple: But there are people who want to force their attitude and ideas on others.

Sri Aurobindo: These are the people who have the idea of *our* work, *our* Ashram. That is a form of ego and that must go.

Disciple: They even want to use physical force to make others accept you as the Guru and Avatar. (*Laughter*)

You know what happened to X, who is a friend of Y when he came here.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, and X could contact the Consciousness only when he had gone from here.

This kind of thing is a great difficulty. There are some people here who, I believe, cant help propagandising. When R came here he was able to feel something here behind all the activities and he was progressing in his own way quite well. But one lecture from Y and the whole thing was upset.

Disciple: I suppose this sort of thing disturbs your work very much.

Sri Aurobindo: Oh, always. Instead of allowing the man to proceed on his own lines there is an effort to force things from viewpoints to which he is not accustomed. It always interferes with the work.

Disciple: Most probably, the man revolts and turns against the Yoga.

Sri Aurobindo: Either he shuts himself, or gets quite false ideas about Yoga.

Disciple: Something should be done, I think, to stop V from carrying on the propaganda.

Sri Aurobindo: Do you think he can be stopped? I have tried and found that nothing makes any impression. (*Laughter*)

Disciple: He is giving lectures.

Sri Aurobindo: I thought he was already a kind of Guru. (*Laughter*)

Disciple: He explains everything on the blackboard.

Sri Aurobindo: What! Explaining the Brahman on the blackboard ! (*Laughter*)

Disciple: One day while V was on gate-duty Amrita told him that the Mothers instruction to all sadhaks on gate-duty is that they should not sit on the chair or read or write while on duty.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, it was true. We know N and others used to continue sitting on the chairs and reply to visitors.

Disciple: When Amrita had given the instructions he asked V why he was not carrying them out. V said: "That is my difficulty." (*Laughter*)

Sri Aurobindo: If you tell these people to go somewhere else and start an Ashram of their own, they wont do that.

Disciple: But when I put the question of difficulty to you it referred to my inner difficulties, — these were not meant, I am afraid. I was only recounting my difficulty in making the surrender.

Sri Aurobindo: And I was recounting mine! (*Laughter*)

Disciple: It is very difficult for a man like me to accept what these people want one to accept. I can accept you as the guide and Guru. But I must have my spiritual experience to believe them.

Sri Aurobindo: It is not always necessary to have the experience in order to believe in a thing. There are many people who believe on faith before they realise. But the difficulty comes when you want to force your faith on others. One can say: "I believe that so and so is an Avatar." But one can't say: "If you don't believe in him I will beat you." (*Laughter*) Then there are others who want to go into the Yoga with their families. There are husbands who get angry with their wives because they can't take to Yoga with them. (*Laughter*)

Disciple: They want to go to heaven with their family like Yudhishthira.

Sri Aurobindo: Going to heaven with the family may be possible, but not into Yoga. In the pursuit of a religious life you can have *budo*, *budi*, *doojanate* — old man, old woman, the two together — as D. L. Roy says.

Disciple: Yes. Then the atmosphere becomes harmonious at home.

Sri Aurobindo: Then there are some like V who tell a newcomer,

when he is refused admission, to stick on!

Disciple: Yes, he gives his own instance and says it was a case of test. Test of faith! "If you have faith you will be admitted."

Sri Aurobindo: In most cases the people who persist are not those who have a real call for the Yoga from something deep in them. In most cases it is obstinacy. I particularly remember one case in which the obstinacy was wonderful. There are others in whom the desire to come and remain here is a mere surface movement, while in others it is there because they are lunatics or eccentrics. Even if you tell them to seek another Guru they won't listen to you!

There was a pause as some disciples left the room.

Disciple: But this letter of Vivekananda is a very sincere letter. It is easy to understand his difficulty. One cannot have freedom from ambition and other weaknesses unless one has the dynamic presence of the Divine all the time, or readily available whenever needed.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. That is one way; or, as I said, if you can establish peace, equality and calm right down to your physical consciousness, so that nothing in you stirs whatever happens, then you can be free from ambition.

These things, as I said, are very difficult to get rid of. When I had the Nirvana experience at Baroda I thought at that time that I had no ambition left — at least personal ambition — in the work that I was doing for the country. Then I used to hear a voice within me telling me all about my inner movement. When I reached Calcutta I heard this voice pointing out things within me which showed that there was personal ambition of which I was till then quite unconscious. So, you see, these things can hide for a very long time.

It is like the contest for the Congress Presidentship in which both sides maintain that it is not ambition that is moving them, but sense of duty, call of the cause, principles, etc.! (*Laughter*)

♑

6 FEBRUARY 1939

Lajpat Rai's letter to G. D. Birla

There are four main points brought out here from the letter:

1. Why act? What is the meaning of action ?
2. How can a perfect all-merciful, all-powerful God create such a world full of misery, suffering, poverty?
3. There is no use praying to God because prayers are only for consoling ourselves.
4. I act simply because I can't help doing actions.

Lajpat Rai now seems to accept the 'illusion' theory as the explanation while he combated it for the whole of his life. He was a prominent leader of the Arya Samaj, and a monotheist.

Disciple: What is the explanation of Lajpat Rai's attitude?

Sri Aurobindo: Generally it is *tāmasic vairāgya*, if it is due to a sense of failure in life. Most people get this kind of Vairagya when they act for 'success' and fail. Failure and frustration lead to what is called *smashāna vairāgya*, a temporary state of world-disgust.

But in his case, perhaps, it is Sattwic disgust. To the mind at this stage everything seems impermanent, fleeting, and the old motives of action are no longer sufficient. It may be the result of his spiritual development through his actions in life. It is mind turning to know things. Gautama Buddha saw human suffering and he asked: "Why this suffering?" and then "How to get out of it?" That is *sattvic vairāgya*. Pure *sattvic vairāgya* is when one gets the perception of the littleness of everything personal — actions, thoughts, etc., and when one sees the vast world, eternal time and infinite space spread out before oneself and feels all human action as if it were nought.

The same truth is behind the proverb: "It will be the same a

hundred years hence." And it is true so far as the personal aspect of action is concerned.

Disciple: Can it be said that personal actions and other personal things have an importance in so far as through them an impersonal consciousness, or a divine purpose, works itself out?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes; in the impersonal aspect even a small personal action may have a significance. Personal actions have an importance in the evolution of the individual. But it is difficult to persuade the ordinary men to take this view.

Disciple: Lajpat Rai, who has been known as an Arya Samajist and therefore a theist, seems to doubt even the existence of God in this letter.

Sri Aurobindo: That does not matter. It only means he wants to understand the way of God's working, the nature of this world, etc.

ON MEDICINE

11 NOVEMBER 1923

A telegram from a mentally deranged sadhak became the topic of this evening. The sadhak in question wanted to die. The suggestion of death, it was thought, was due to some hereditary poison in the blood. These kinds of poisons often attack the brain.

Sri Aurobindo: It is these people who also get a sense of sin and the tendency to repent and humble themselves before others. Also they have very big ideas about themselves. They think they are very important in the universal scheme.

(*After a pause*) This Yoga, to be done well, requires perfect balance. Therefore, those who have merely a general call for Yoga should not go in for this Yoga, because it opens a possibility for the Higher Consciousness to work as well as a possibility for the powers of the vital world to come and take possession. If a man has not got the perfect balance, it becomes easier for these powers to take possession of him. Sometimes the man who has no faith in things invisible is much better off than the man who has faith in them or the man who has a tendency towards occultism. He is generally free — comparatively free — from attacks from the subtle planes because he does not accept them and so is not open to them. While the man who believes in them gives them a chance. In this Yoga you must have a sane mind.

Disciple: The general idea is that unless one has got a screw loose in his brain one would not come for Yoga. (*Laughter*)

Sri Aurobindo: How do you mean? If a screw is loose then the machine is not doing its work at all!

Disciple: The idea seems to be: the more loose screws the better chance for Yoga. (*Laughter*)

Sri Aurobindo: You mean myself? (*Laughter*)

Disciple: I did not mean that. But does it mean that a sane man is more fit for Yoga?

Sri Aurobindo: A perfect Yoga requires perfect balance.

Disciple: I am afraid, sane men generally are matter-of-fact.

Sri Aurobindo: Not necessarily. What do you mean by sane?

Disciple: Sane does not mean dull.

Sri Aurobindo: Of course not; when I speak of want of balance in these people, I do not mean they are insane. It only means that their development is not proportionate, it is lopsided or there is a twist somewhere in their nature which prevents the harmonious development of all the parts.

(*An interval of silence*)

That was the thing that saved me all through, I mean the perfect balance. First of all I believed that nothing was impossible, and at the same time I could question everything. If I had believed in everything that came I would have been like Bijoy Krishna Goswami.

Disciple: What is 'perfect balance'?

Sri Aurobindo: A perfect Yogi can have strong imagination and equally strong reason. Imagination can believe in everything while reason works out the logical steps. Even in the case of scientists you find they have a very strong imagination.

Disciple: It is not exactly imagination perhaps?

Sri Aurobindo: Imagination is the power of conceiving things beyond the ordinary experience of life.

Disciple: Does it correspond to Truth? or is there a higher faculty of which imagination is the representative in the mind?

Sri Aurobindo: It ultimately becomes inspiration, when it ascends higher. The purer it becomes the nearer it gets to Truth. For

instance, in the case of poets, generally it is the inspired imagination that works. What you meant to say about the scientist was perhaps intuition.

(*After a pause*) The capital period of my intellectual development was when I could see clearly that what the intellect said might be correct and not correct, that what the intellect justified was true and its opposite also was true. I never admitted a truth in the mind without simultaneously keeping it open to the contrary of it.

You see, Mind means infinite possibility. Reason or intelligence chooses one to the exclusion of all the other possibilities. And it is reason which gives value and selects. What it selects is like a law of science; you accept it because it explains most of the phenomena. In the mind we accept one possibility and suppress the others and so we see the ground for the view we hold and other grounds are suppressed. Or the intellect goes on in a futile round and justifies the choice which has already been made by some other part of the being. The intellect is merely selective. I felt this very clearly for a long time. And the first result was that the prestige of the intellect was gone. As you go higher up, a wider movement develops which reconciles all contraries. Then you see the forces that are behind mental ideas. Of course, it is no use telling this to the ordinary man as he would be in a most hopeless confusion if he saw everything as mere possibilities. For instance, you would be absolutely confounded if I placed before you all the possibilities.

Disciple: When all intellectual operations appear merely as dealing with possibilities then what is to be selected and how is one to act?

Sri Aurobindo: There is no need to be puzzled. Simply look at them, watch them, see what they are and what is behind them. E.g., I can laugh at Shankaras Mayavada or Gandhi's views; but I can see the truth that is behind them. I know the place they occupy in the play of world-forces; for, it really comes to that.

Disciple: Can want of balance be overcome?

Sri Aurobindo: Everything can be done. You can do it within your limits; you can correct the exaggerations of the parts in you that are well-developed and develop those that are suppressed and bring about a balance in your being.

♊

5 JULY 1924

There was an article in *The Hindu* against Dr. Abraham's method of treatment.

Sri Aurobindo: There is no argument advanced against Abraham's theory. I am sure his intuition is correct and it will be much more easily worked out by him when the science and experiment are settled so that anyone can do the thing. But, generally, in a discovery a man works by an intuition and the man who first sees the thing can very easily work it out.

I am also pretty sure that the idea that diseases are due to electrical vibrations and that they can be cured by producing certain other more powerful vibrations is also correct.

Apart from the psychic causes, in the pure physical body it works by vibrations. In yogic practice also an electrical phenomenon generally occurs. And when the Power descends some sort of electrical vibrations take place in the physical system. It is by that movement that the diseases are cured — by that the harmony is again restored.

♍

19 SEPTEMBER 1925

There was a discussion between two disciples — one of them was a doctor. The doctors idea was that in Samadhi the physical mind is still, and if we look only to the physical body, then it seems that the venous blood collects in the brain and brings about a sort of anaesthesia of the brain. When the brain is thus completely quieted down then the mind — the mental consciousness — is released from the entanglement of the body. It can then experience more freely the other levels of consciousness.

Disciple: What is the venous blood?

Disciple: Blood having more carbon dioxide in it than the red blood.

Disciple: So the brain becomes full of carbon dioxide in Samadhi, does it?

(In between, a letter was read from a sadhak complaining about the bad condition of his Sadhana and asking permission to come to Pondicherry.)

Sri Aurobindo: Tell him that all the sadhaks get difficulties in Sadhana and periods of depression come to each one. That is no reason to run down here. Even those who are here get periods of depression. One should be able to go through such trials. Sadhana never moves in a straight line — there are always ups and downs. It is not a work of days and months but of years. These periods come generally when something new is going to begin in Sadhana, some opening to a new plane, or some such thing.

The reason why he is not getting knowledge, probably, is that his mind is active. So long as the mind is active Higher Knowledge cannot come. He can get mental knowledge, of course.

Ask him to make his mind passive and open to the Higher Knowledge. Let him stop the egoistic activity in his mind. When I ask him to be passive I do not mean that he should repress the thoughts that come to his mind; he should rather separate himself

as the mental Purusha and watch the thoughts as happening in him, but not as his. He has to watch them and reject those that are to be rejected.

Disciple: Many people mistake inertia for passivity. I mistook it for a long time. I used to remain inactive when I got an illness and then I found that I was consenting to it.

Sri Aurobindo: Real passivity is openness to the Higher Force; it is not inertia.

(After a pause Sri Aurobindo turned to the doctor disciple)

Do you know of a Japanese healer, Dr. Kobayashi, a famous surgeon, who is a Yogi following the Amitabha Buddha school of Sadhana? During his medical practice he found that the method he was following was not correct. So he followed an inner process. He makes the patients sit in meditation with him and asks them to concentrate on the navel and to aspire that the Light may come down and set right the affected organ. By now he has cured thousands of patients; of course, his personal influence is indispensable in bringing down the Light.

He has cured tumours and many uterine complaints; he has even cured cancer. He is especially successful in curing diseases of women. His theory is that the disease is due to a passive congestion in the affected part. That is to say, the nerves there get congested and the vital force is not able to reach that part. What the Light does is that it brings about a subtle and quick vibration in the affected part, thereby restoring normal circulation. But whatever the theory, this is a method of curing diseases by pure, subtle force. Something from the occult plane comes down and removes the obstacle from the physical plane.

Disciple: It seems like the method of auto-suggestion given by Dr. Coué.

Sri Aurobindo: No, it is not Coué's method. Coué gives the suggestion which works out in the patient; while this is a direct,

occult method.

Disciple: Is his theory correct?

Sri Aurobindo: I can't say. What I think is that some occult force comes down and works out the disease. But it is very difficult to say what exactly happens on the physical plane.

Probably, the Hatha Yogins used to do what this Japanese doctor is doing, with their knowledge of the vital-physical currents. For instance, they could set right all the disorders below the navel by controlling the Vyana — the vital current that works in the whole system. They would find out which Prana is less, then send the required current of vital energy which would work the disease out of the system.

(*After a pause*) I was thinking of the carbon dioxide explanation of Samadhi. It may be perfectly true so far as a particular kind of Samadhi is concerned. For example, there is a state in which a complete withdrawal into a certain aspect of the Infinite takes place. It is attained by stilling the mind — even the physical mind — altogether. But there are other kinds of concentrations where that explanation would not apply at all. In such concentrations the mind is quite clear, in fact, the mind can be very active and there is no carbon dioxide in the brain.

Disciple: What part does Pranayama play in bringing down the Higher Consciousness?

Sri Aurobindo: It sets the Pranic currents free and removes dullness of the brain so that the Higher Consciousness can come down. Pranayama does not bring dullness in the brain. My own experience, on the contrary, is that the brain becomes illumined. When I was practising Pranayama at Baroda, I used to do it for about five hours in the day, — three hours in the morning and two in the evening. I found that the mind began to work with great illumination and power. I used to write poetry in those days. Before the Pranayama practice, usually I wrote five to eight lines per day,

about 200 lines in a month. After the practice I could write 200 lines within half an hour. That was not the only result. Formerly my memory was dull. But after this practice I found that when the inspiration came I could remember all the lines in their order and write them down correctly at any time. Along with these enhanced functionings I could see an electrical activity all around the brain, and I could feel that it was made up of a subtle substance. I could feel everything as the working of that substance. That was far from your carbon dioxide!

Disciple: Did you find any change in mental activity when breathing completely stopped?

Sri Aurobindo: I do not know about complete stopping of the breath, but at the time of Pranayama the breath becomes regular and rhythmic.

Disciple: How is it that Pranayama develops mental capacities? What part does it play in bringing down the Higher Consciousness?

Sri Aurobindo: It is the Pranic currents which sustain mental activity. When these currents are changed by Pranayama, they bring about a change in the brain. The cause of dullness of the brain is some obstruction in it which does not allow the higher thought to be communicated to it. When this obstruction is removed the higher mental being is able to communicate its action easily to the brain. When the Higher Consciousness is attained the brain does not become dull. My experience is that it becomes illumined.

All exercises, like the breathing-practices, are only devices which something that is behind them is using for manifesting itself. On the physical plane also, it is nothing else but certain devices — a system of notations — that we employ. But we give too much importance to the form of the device, because we think the physical to be the most real. If we only knew that the entire physical world is made up of energy and that it is nothing else but the working of a certain consciousness and power using certain devices then we would not

be deceived.

Disciple: Is it true that when the Higher Consciousness comes the brain stops thinking?

Sri Aurobindo: What do you mean? The brain is not the seat of thought! It is the mind that thinks, the brain only reacts to it. There is a parallelism between the movements of the brain and those of the Higher Mind. But the brain is only a communicating channel, it is only a support for the higher activity. If the mind is passive it receives things from above, from the Higher Mind, and passes them on to the brain.

Now, if the brain is dull, the mind cannot transmit its action correctly, it does it imperfectly. Sometimes, not always, the lapse in Sadhana also is due to the brain getting tired.

Disciple: Is it not always due to that?

Sri Aurobindo: No, in the bright period the progress is maintained. But when the physical brain flags and refuses to support the effort of the will and mind, then you find a dull and Tamasic condition in Sadhana intervenes.

Disciple: What is sleep?

Sri Aurobindo: Sleep!

Disciple: Physiologically, the nerve-endings get disconnected with the consciousness, and as they are not obliged to do any work they recuperate themselves. All their normal functions are suspended during sleep, so they get rest. There are various theories of sleep in medical science.

Sri Aurobindo: I do not know what it is physiologically, but it is a condition of Tamasic withdrawal into the inner consciousness. It is likely that as the normal functions are suspended the nerves recoup themselves.

Disciple: Do you think that such a retirement into the inner consciousness is a necessary condition for maintaining the body?

Sri Aurobindo: No. It is merely a habit, if you like, a bad habit acquired by man when he was living with the animals, as one writer says.

Disciple: Can one get rid of the habit?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, of course. Even food is a habit. But that does not mean that you can stop it today. By habit it has become indispensable. If you stop it suddenly your body may break down. You would die if you had no other force which could replace the one you derived from sleep.

Disciple: What is the other thing that can replace sleep?

Sri Aurobindo: Ten minutes of yogic sleep are equal to hours of ordinary sleep.

Disciple: When one sleeps one gets dreams also. Have these dreams anything to do with the brain?

Sri Aurobindo: Dreams have nothing to do with the brain. A dream is merely a confused transcript in sleep of something that happens behind. The thing gets confused because the controlling mind is not there. All sorts of things rush up from the passive memory, events of the day, impressions of the mind. If the mind remains conscious in dreams, you can know the working that takes place behind. Some dreams correctly represent what is taking place behind — such dreams are clear and cogent.

As I said about Samadhi, so also about dreams, it is very difficult to say what happens exactly on the physical plane. All things on the physical plane are merely devices — they are a system of notations — just like the wireless or telegraphic notations, convenient for sending messages; but often we get too busy with the device and mistake it for the thing that is behind the device.

And this applies to all scientific discoveries. For instance, when you say "Hydrogen and oxygen in certain proportions form water," the statement does not explain anything. It only states a fact. You do

not know what water is. It only means there is something behind which manifests itself as water under those conditions.

It is the same with the theory of electrons. So far as the physical facts are concerned the theory may be perfectly true. But why should the blessed electrons, which are fundamentally the same substance, form totally different elements and compounds by the change of arrangement of the same number?

Disciple: Not only that, but the addition or subtraction of one electron changes radically the properties — that is, the nature — of the substance. And even with the same number of electrons a change in the arrangement alters radically the substance. So much so that one substance is a poison and the other is not.

Sri Aurobindo: So I say there is something behind the device which already pre-exists on some plane and it is that which adopts the device in order to manifest itself. But the device is not the reality. The power from behind can change the device. Of course, the power working from behind comes down on the physical plane through the device, and so people generally think that it is the device which is responsible for the manifestation.

As an instance of the change of device I told you about Agamya Guru Paramahamsa. He could stop his heart-beats and go on talking and working like other men. Now, ordinarily, when the heart stops the man dies, or gets into a cataleptic Samadhi. But in his case it was not so.

Disciple: How many hours do you sleep?

Sri Aurobindo: Five hours or more.

Disciple: Can you do without sleep?

Sri Aurobindo: I have not tried yet.

Disciple: But suppose you try?

Sri Aurobindo: I cant say, I must try and see. Once I tried for two days with the result that on the third day I slept for nine hours.

Disciple: Is there no difference between your sleep and that of an ordinary person?

Sri Aurobindo: It is not all like ordinary sleep, — though it is that for the most part. The only time that I very nearly conquered sleep was in jail. I used to keep awake for two days and sleep on the third. I did it for ten days.

♍

20 SEPTEMBER 1925

A letter from Bhupal Chandra Bose, Sri Aurobindo's father-in-law, relating the illness of another son-in-law of his. It is a case of tuberculosis.

Sri Aurobindo (*to a disciple*)**:** You can write to him that I will do my best to help him, though under the circumstances it is difficult for me to do so. But a change of climate might help him.

Disciple: Dr. Matthews, a specialist in T.B., says that it is not medicine but social surroundings, the economic condition, that must change for a cure. Air, light, food, walking — these are more important than medicine.

Sri Aurobindo: His ideas are quite sane. This disease starts generally when there is psychic depression.

Disciple: What is psychic depression ?

Sri Aurobindo: It is the depression of the inner being. (*Laughter — as the question was evaded.)*

(*After a pause*) There is something in us that takes the joy of life. I don't mean the vital joy. Normally, it is a certain inner happiness, — you can't really call it happiness, it is a certain inner joy and well-being kept up by the psychic being. When that gets affected then there is psychic depression.

Disciple: How does that get affected?

Sri Aurobindo: Well, there are so many causes: some shock, some great sorrow, a weighing down by anxiety, overwork, care or trouble, or some affection of a vital organ of the physical system — any of these can bring about psychic depression.

Disciple: Can it be overcome?

Sri Aurobindo: All kinds of depression can be overcome.

Disciple: How can the psychic depression be overcome?

Sri Aurobindo: By supplying the psychic force. (*Laughter*)

(*After a pause*) This psychic depression comes in a very strange way. Suppose you keep an artist in very ugly surroundings, then his psychic being may get depressed.

Disciple: If it is a question of giving psychic force to the patient, then I believe it is comparatively easy work for you.

Sri Aurobindo: But I can't be all the time putting force. The difficulty is that we are not known to each other. This case seems more hopeful than that of X because here at least I *can* put the force. In the case of X also we were not known to each other. But when I send the help I find there is something very thick in the atmosphere there and so a great pressure has to be put before it can be pierced through and the resistance overcome. Perhaps there is somebody in the family who resists. The third reason for the unsuccessful result is that the man is not accustomed to the kind of inner exercise involved in receiving psychic help.

Such cases at a distance are difficult. It is easier in the case of a person who is near or somebody who has faith, or psychic contact.

Disciple: By what other way can psychic depression be overcome?

Sri Aurobindo: There are many ways. If the man is vitally strong then his vital force can help remove the psychic depression. These forces in the inner being can always mutually react.

Disciple: What is the vital force?

Sri Aurobindo: It is the life-force in man; there is a certain energy you feel within you which meets the shocks of life. It is that which gives you capacity to overcome obstacles. It is very necessary for ordinary men. It can pull you through a prolonged illness. As the Prashna Upanishad says: *prāṇasyedam vaśe sarvam tridive yat pratiṣṭhitam* — Whatever there is in this universe is subject to Prana. Even mental activities are due to Prana, life-force. It is the life-force that keeps the world going.

Disciple: How to overcome vital depression?

Sri Aurobindo: By supplying the vital force. (*Laughter*)

(*After a pause*) You have to draw the vital energy from the infinite ocean of universal vital force that is all around you.

Disciple: The next question is: "How to draw it?"

Sri Aurobindo: You have something more than your hands and feet, with which you can lay hold on the vital energy from within.

Disciple: How to draw the vital force? I mean I don't know how to draw it consciously.

Sri Aurobindo: What you can do unconsciously you can always teach yourself to do consciously.

There are two main ways: passive and active. In the first you remain passive, waiting for the vital force to enter into you; then you find it rushes into you. In the other method you lay hold on the force and draw it in.

Disciple: Suppose a man is weak and you give him spiritual help; can it do harm to him?

Sri Aurobindo: No. Weakness does not matter. But if there is anything that obstructs the working of the Higher Power then it may harm him.

Disciple: How can the Higher Power harm a person?

Sri Aurobindo: It is not the Higher Power that harms; it is the fight that harms, because the struggle is made more acute on account of the hostile forces. It is always safer to avoid such conflicts.

(*After a pause*) If I were to put force on Y probably the first result would be that he would be more mad, because those forces that possess him now would naturally get angry. In the case of Z also the difficulty was that he was completely possessed by the hostile force.

♍

26 SEPTEMBER 1925

A telegram came from Calcutta containing discouraging news about the health of the patient.

Disciple (doctor): He might be going through his last stages.

Sri Aurobindo: After seeing the photograph I had little hope. In cases like this one there are two conditions necessary: 1. Personal contact and readiness to receive help; 2. the descent of the Higher Power which does not care for the circumstances. But conditions are not yet ready for such a descent.

Disciple (doctor): This is a preventable disease and can be easily prevented by improving the general condition of hygiene and sanitation.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, it is true; but our town-life with its crowding and the wear and tear of modern life hardly create the vital and psychic atmosphere for a long span of life or vital healthfulness.

Disciple: In some countries in Europe, especially Scotland, there are very efficient organisations. For example, in Edinburgh they

supply sputum pots for every man in the family. It is then examined and those persons suspected of being affected are segregated, treated and cured. Their sputum is again examined and when it is found to be normal then they are allowed to go back and live with the family.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, you can raise the standard of health and eliminate these diseases to a very great extent by these means.

Disciple: Cannot death be conquered by them?

Sri Aurobindo: Oh, no; death is far too ingenious for that. That is never the way to conquer death. Nature is not so mechanical; she is a conscious being. If you try to circumvent her in one way she circumvents you in another. All that this sanitation and hygiene etc. of yours can deal with is the physical circumstances of health. But they cannot get at the vital forces which are behind and of which the physical circumstances are mere instruments. During the war there was a perfect organisation to prevent epidemics, and that succeeded well. But after the war they broke out with great force. All that is not conquering death.

Disciple: Swami Brahmananda of Chandod lived for more than 200 years.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. If you know Hatha Yoga you can keep the body safe against disease. You can also reduce the slow process of ageing by supplying the vital force. The difficulty is you can't be always in Samadhi.

Disciple: Tibbati Baba says that man can conquer death by taking a certain medicine.

Sri Aurobindo: With apologies to our friend, the doctor, I must say it is more likely to kill you sooner.

Disciple: But he says also that it is very difficult for a man to take it — the condition is that he must observe Brahmacharya.

Disciple: Yes, and there will be some other conditions also

which it will be quite impossible to fulfil.

Disciple: He promised to give the medicine to X after some time.

Disciple: Why after some time?

Sri Aurobindo: But X died very young from the yogic point of view.

Disciple: Yes, he died before he could take the medicine. (*Laughter*)

Disciple: Death so managed it that he could not get the medicine in time!

Disciple: Has anyone conquered death before in the past?

Sri Aurobindo: We have to find out, — we don't know. The Mahatmas are said to have conquered death.

Disciple: They can be seen in Vaishakha Valley according to a recent publication of the Theosophists.

Disciple: Aswatthama is said to be immortal.

Sri Aurobindo: And, it seems, he has been seen by some people somewhere in Gujarat.

Disciple: It was near Surpan on the Narbada river.

Sri Aurobindo: He leaves footprints twice as big as those of our friend here.

Disciple: Formerly, according to an article by Mr. Hiren Dutt, there was nothing but gas on this earth.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, and the earth was volcanic and man could not live upon it.

Disciple: Then he became a bag and remained in his *kāraṇa śarīra* — causal body — and from that condition he developed into something like a barrel without hands and feet.

Sri Aurobindo: But there are cycles of evolution, not one evolutionary movement.

Disciple: Yes, many cycles have taken place in this world-evolution and different races have their roots.

Sri Aurobindo: There are five root races and others are sub-races; and, I believe, the sixth root race was being prepared in California and then it has shifted perhaps to Australia.

Disciple: Their theory is that there was a great civilisation on the continent of Atlantis.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, there is every possibility that it is true.

Disciple: What is the proof?

Sri Aurobindo: Well, it is so, perhaps, because the Master says it is so. But apart from that, they take their stand on geology and the theory of evolution. Once there was an idea that civilisation is only three or four thousand years old. Now people are forced to change their ideas.

Disciple: But the details about the last civilisation and the Mahatmas — are they all true?

Sri Aurobindo: What do you mean by 'true'? On the vital plane there is nothing that you cannot see: you can recast the whole history of the world. It is not the mental plane — really speaking it is the mental-vital. I was in that condition for ten days and any number of things came at that time.

Disciple: You could have written them down.

Sri Aurobindo: If I had thought them worthwhile.

Disciple: But then how far is it all true?

Sri Aurobindo: There is always some truth at the bottom. For instance, there is every likelihood that the continent of Atlantis had a great civilisation. So also the idea of evolution is true as far as physical evolution is concerned. But the fourth and fifth root race and the other details which are given are not certain.

That is the difficulty: to isolate the true intuition from the

mixture — mental as well as vital. It would be quite another matter if one could keep the mind completely passive. But, evidently, that is impossible. The mind enters so much and also the vital being — they are both great and active creators.

Disciple: But what you see on the vital plane — in that state — is it true?

Sri Aurobindo: Again, what do you mean by true? Something that you see is true somewhere — on some other plane — some of those things are probabilities, some are only tendencies trying to realise themselves. But it may not be true for this earth-plane.

♍

7 OCTOBER 1925

A telegram from Jagatsingh (about his health): "Worse and spirits better."

♍

11 OCTOBER 1925

The question this evening was whether Coué's method could be used by a sadhak of this Yoga and also what attitude one must keep when diseases came. In many families in India some kind of illness is a normal feature and one has to be always attending to the patient.

Disciple: Is there any objection to using Dr. Coué's method for curing disease?

Sri Aurobindo: No, there is not the slightest objection to using it. Only, you must know that you can't auto-suggest yourself into the

Supermind, because that is not so easy. That is to say, that method won't do for this Yoga. If you constantly go on suggesting to yourself, "I am pure" — you would not automatically become pure. There is the question of facing facts. You have to see what is impure in you, then call down the Higher Power and pray to Her to purify you.

In Coué's method there is a sharp distinction between will and imagination. You must know what 'will' is. Coué's idea is not the same as our idea of will. Will is not mental effort, it is not the vital push which men use in general to satisfy their desires. It is not strong wishing either; will is not a struggling, striving and unquiet thing. It is calm. When it is calm it is really a call for the Higher Power to come down and act. There is a will which works by dominating over Nature. Another kind of will does not so much dominate as aspire in a prayerful mood for the Higher Power to come down. The highest will is the Divine Will. It is that which is indispensable to all success, it acts automatically.

Disciple: For the cure of the disease, by any method whatsoever, is not faith necessary?

Sri Aurobindo: Faith is necessary for any such cure, even in Coué's method.

Disciple: How is Coué's method useful for the sadhak of our Yoga?

Sri Aurobindo: It may be used to a certain extent in the beginning but not to the end. His method is not universal. It does not succeed in all cases. In fact, it depends upon hypnotising the unconscious. But in some people's case the unconscious refuses the suggestion, so it does not succeed.

In our Yoga we have to grow more and more conscious, so that the subconscious also, in our case, becomes wide awake. Besides, the aim of our Yoga is not to find out the most efficient method of healing diseases so much as to change the entire consciousness —

even the physical — in order that disease may not come at all. The entire being must be so transformed that disease becomes impossible.

The question of compatibility of Yoga and action was raised.

Sri Aurobindo: Activity is not incompatible with our Yoga. The action to be done should proceed on the basis of peace and knowledge. It must be deliberate and calm. One can take up action in which many men are not concerned — which depends upon ones own self for its performance. For instance, intellectual work and physical work can be done in this Yoga. There may come a time when all action has to be abandoned — such a stage has a temporary utility. In that period one has to do intensive concentrated Sadhana.

Secondly, when one rises to another plane of consciousness, one finds the whole viewpoint about things completely changed. In that condition one cannot continue the same intellectual activity as before. One has to wait till the Higher Consciousness begins to act. Of course, when the entire being is transformed then one has to accept all the planes of life and manifest the Higher Consciousness in life.

There was mention of "rich development" of Sadhana.

Sri Aurobindo: A well-trained intellect and a strong vital being are a great hindrance as well as a great help in this Yoga. They are helpful because they render the being wide and allow the higher activity easily. For instance, if the intellect is well-trained, accurate, and can arrange things, is plastic and elastic, then the sadhak can understand the working of the Higher Power, arrange his experience, discriminate and so on. But intellect can also be an obstacle because it tends to be an independent plane of consciousness. It may be unwilling to let go its control or hold. It

may continue making efforts for the Higher Knowledge in which case the latter can never develop. It can hamper the progress by doubt, denial and refusal to give up its control. The same is the case with a strong vital being. If it is transparent and pure it is a very great help. But if there is something impure in it which refuses to give itself up to the Higher Power, obstinate and turned downwards, then it is a great hindrance.

Richness in Sadhana can be attained even without any previous preparation. There comes a time in Sadhana when the various parts of the being attain to their fulfilment from within — of course, this is true within certain limits.

A disciple mentioned the difficulty of the vital impulse to act.

Sri Aurobindo: The impulse to act is always there, especially if one has been doing action. It is a movement of the dynamic mind which wants to go on doing things. It goes on acting, planning, thinking even when one does not want to act. The dynamic mind wants to throw itself into action. From the point of view of Yoga it is a waste of energy. What you have to do is to separate yourself from your nature and all its movements. You must be able to see them as things coming from the universal Prakriti. You must externalise them all.

♍

14 OCTOBER 1925

A letter from Nirmal Chand about Jagatsingh's illness. In Sri Aurobindo's reply the following points were mentioned:

1. Improvement in his cancer is encouraging. It shows receptivity.

2. I had been working on those points where he finds

improvement.

3. Where he has failed it is due not to his fault, but because the Power that is coming down does not as yet dominate the most material plane.

4. If Jagatsingh can stand the fight for a long time there is no reason why he should not be cured. It is very difficult to say with certainty what the result would be in such a case, yet I have not given it up as a desperate one. The attitude of Samata which he has taken up with regard to the result is absolutely necessary.

In the letter Jagatsingh had said that the spiritual help was undeserved.

Sri Aurobindo: It is never undeserved. It has come to him because he is a good Adhar. His psychic being seems to be of an unusually high order, and his other parts of nature are also strong.

(*Jagatsingh had expressed a desire to see Sri Aurobindo either psychically or physically.*)

I do not know whether he has got the psychic sight. I mean whether he has developed it and is able to see visions etc. However I shall try. If he can maintain his fight he can see me here.

(Moni Lahiri took up the Yoga and finds peace after he began Sadhana. He used to be very violent and angry.)

Sri Aurobindo: That kind of mind takes a long time to come round. I do not think he would be able to complete his progress in this life. He seems to be a man who would take several lives before he could progress. Of course, nothing can be said with certainty because something may turn up and change the whole course of the being.

Disciple: What would such a radical change be due to?

Sri Aurobindo: It would be obviously due to something. It is

something going on behind that is responsible for such a change and all the mental reasoning, causes and other things, that appear with the change, are merely external covers, mere arrangements for working out the thing that is in the background.

Disciple: Is it not due to the Grace of God?

Sri Aurobindo: That is a way of explaining it, though, really speaking, it does not explain anything when you say, "It is Divine Grace."

Disciple: But is there no law governing the Grace?

Sri Aurobindo: You seem to be very constitutional. You must allow God some absolute power!

Disciple: I do, I have no objection to His having absolute power!

Disciple: A great concession to God!

Disciple: What I object to in God is that He is not definite. There must be certain conditions to deserve His Grace!

Sri Aurobindo: That is again merely a way of putting it. You may as well say in Jagatsingh's case that he deserved it because he made himself fit for it by making mental and other efforts.

Disciple: But there must be some reason.

Sri Aurobindo: God may have His own reasons, which are obviously not your mental reasons.

Disciple: But why can't God be definite?

Sri Aurobindo: If He became definite then all the *mojā* — fun — would go.

Disciple: Then you will make a law of it.

Disciple: But in this way God breaks His own laws!

Sri Aurobindo: How do you know that He breaks His own laws? That is why some religions say that there is nothing but Grace. God's Grace is inexplicable. It eludes all mental analysis.

Disciple: In that case the Bhaktas have a very good chance.

Sri Aurobindo: Again you want to make another law! You can't say that the devotees have *more* chance. All you can say is, "Such and such things happen." God's Grace is without any reason. There are no mental laws governing it. Even in Yoga what His Grace does is much more than what can be done by personal effort.

Disciple: In Sadhana you go on trying and trying and the obstruction does not yield. Then suddenly you find the point of resistance is removed.

Sri Aurobindo: That is what I say. In such cases the effort is nowhere.

Disciple: Then everything is due to Grace, we must say.

Sri Aurobindo: In a way, you can say that. It is again a way of putting it!

Disciple: In the case of men who undergo a sudden change in their life, I think it is due to Grace. For example, there is the case of Lala Babu: he heard only one word and at once got Vairagya.

Sri Aurobindo: Vairagya many people get.

Disciple: With him it lasted.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, it can easily last. That is not the question. Even in the case of persons whose external life shows no sign that promises a change, that is, in the most unexpected cases also changes may come. In such cases, judging merely by the external life, you can't say that there was nothing in the man that wanted to change. The question is not what the mind and other parts demand, but what the inner being demands.

Many times it happens that the psychic being is covered up completely by some obstruction and then suddenly a blow is given which at once removes the obstacle.

Disciple: But the first awakening of the inner being is due to Grace, I believe?

Sri Aurobindo: All first awakenings are an act of Grace. You are given a glimpse and then you have to work it out.

Disciple: Then there is no room for effort.

Sri Aurobindo: That is a way of putting it! You can say there is Grace and there is effort also, both are true and necessary. Grace is above; what the mind can do is to prepare itself and the rest of the being — the vital and the physical — for the Grace. The mind can even work out the impurities and in a way break the resistance.

Disciple: There may be no law governing Grace in the sense in which we understand it, but there must be some law though not a mental one?

Sri Aurobindo: Of course, there is a law. But in the beginning God respects the law of each plane even though He transcends it. When the human being is raised completely above the mind then he finds the new law. Then all constructions of the mind break down.

Theoretically, there is no reason why Supermind should not come down soon and why one should not get it in a series of flashes in six months. But in that way the object is not attained. The object is to see the world-forces, to meet them on their own plane and defeat them there. Practically, it means a fight with the world-forces.

Disciple: But suppose the world-forces do not want the Supermind?

Sri Aurobindo: It is not what the world-forces want, but what *you* want that matters. Forces can only intensify the struggle. The world-forces never want to change their law. But if you and God want to change them then they *can* be changed. Your wanting to change them is necessary, but without God wanting it, it is not sufficient.

Disciple: If the world-forces do not want to change then how to change them?

Sri Aurobindo: You have to work on them, meet them and defeat them.

The talk turned to a sadhak whose mind was deranged.

Disciple: What is his madness due to?

Sri Aurobindo: Evidently, it is not want of intelligence that sent him mad. Even in the shattered intelligence of his present state you can see sparks of truth coming out. Some of the things he said were quite true though he expressed them in a queer way. For instance, he said, "I keep all the experiences hanging till I reach the Supermind." That is quite true. Something from behind was trying to express the truth. His external being always misapplies the truth he gets in this way. Here the truth is that the mind has to hold all opposite things in balance till the Higher Light comes and reconciles them.

Disciple: If his intelligence was all right then where was the defect in him?

Sri Aurobindo: The defect was in the physical mind. There was also weakness in the physical nervous system. I cannot be sure whether that was due to something in the very material constitution of the body itself. The power that he pulled into himself was too much for the physical mind and the nerves. His physical being also is very weak. When the Higher Power descended upon it, it broke down.

Disciple: Could he have been saved if he had been here?

Sri Aurobindo: Well, that depends. But I could have attended to the situation myself and dealt at once without having to wait for letters. The atmosphere here also might have helped him. But I can't say. It is only a probability, because the defect in his lower nature was there.

Disciple: There are cures of madness effected by Ojhas —

certain people with occult knowledge. Are such cures final?

Sri Aurobindo: If the man has nothing in him which calls back the force that possessed him, he may get well permanently. But if he has some part which feels empty without the possessing force then it may come back.

A letter from a sadhika stating that she gets Shanti but no new experience.

Sri Aurobindo: You can ask what kind of Shanti she is feeling. Is it a mental quiet or does the peace descend from above? It is the first thing that comes in this Yoga. But there are various kinds of peace. There is a peace which descends with wideness. Ask her if she feels that she is living in that peace and wideness.

If she does not, what she has to do is to go on deepening the peace. She must experience the peace more and more till it becomes constant and remains even while she is not sitting in meditation. All her work must proceed from that peace. If she can succeed in this she will be able to know how the thought comes into the mind and from where. She will also be able to see the movement in her vital being. She must slowly feel something in her that is detached from all these things.

Another sadhika wrote how her husband, after insisting on her taking up Yoga, had now turned round. He wanted to be flattered, and so misconstrued her silence as displeasure, her independent opinion as haughtiness and her strong determinadon to reject and throw away all vital enjoyment as an insult.

Sri Aurobindo: What is remarkable about her is her sharp and honest intelligence. You can tell her that the higher relation, if there was any, would unfold itself from above, and it can be known only then. What then happens can be left aside at present. She must neither accept nor reject her relation with her husband. She must

remain firm in her resolve about the Yoga and allow things to take their own course.

Disciple: I know of some cures effected by Pagala Kali Baba in Bengal. An iron ring is given to the patient to be worn always on the person. If he takes it off under any circumstances he again gets a relapse. There are other rules also, e.g., he must change his clothes after going to the lavatory. Are these men permanently cured?

Sri Aurobindo: They have a sort of protection, an armour or Kavacha, around them. But the defect in the nature of the person may remain underneath the Kavacha. You must know that the hostile forces are very persistent and obstinate — being so is their common virtue!

♎

5 NOVEMBER 1925

Sri Aurobindo was not disposed at first to talk this evening. Then a disciple put a question about immunity from physical diseases by Hatha Yoga.

Sri Aurobindo: In Hatha Yoga you are all right so long as you continue the practice. As soon as you leave it off you are liable to attacks.

In Raja Yoga also you have to continue Pranayama once you begin it. My own experience is that when I was practising Pranayama at Baroda I had excellent health. But when I went to Bengal and left Pranayama, I was attacked by all sorts of illness which nearly carried me off.

♏

5 DECEMBER 1925

Mrs. X wanted to have Sri Aurobindo's guidance after the death of her husband. She also expressed a desire to see in the subtle her dead husband.

Sri Aurobindo: About her seeing her husband who is dead, two things may be written to her: Firstly, it depends on a certain capacity in oneself to be able to see, which, everybody has not got. Secondly, if the departed soul has got the will he can manifest himself. But if he is not willing, it is not good to pull him back to that relation, as it may retard his movement in the other planes where he may have to remain for his development. It is not good to tie him down to earthly attachment.

She writes about the Truth and its attainment. In case she wants it the demand for it must be independent of the depression through which she is passing. If there is a call deep within her then it will be answered.

Disciple: There is A, from Chittagong, who wants a reply to his letter. He is already having a hut there for his Sadhana.

Sri Aurobindo: I don't understand why a hut is necessary.

Disciple: It is the time-honoured custom for beginning spiritual life. You don't seem to give any value to it.

Sri Aurobindo: Was it a custom to build a hut before you began Sadhana?

Disciple: No. They used to give up everything and retire to the forest.

Sri Aurobindo: And immediately build a hut?

Disciple: In the Ramayana there is a story of a king — I think Dhvaja — who went to the forest and remained in a hut.

Disciple: Yes, and his Guru — who was his wife in disguise — came there and convinced him that he had not given up the world!

(*Laughter*) Then they went back and lived happily ever afterwards.

Sri Aurobindo: That was all right in those days. But now people who think of building huts have more chance of going mad than they had in the olden times.

Disciple: What is the cause of it? Why do people nowadays easily fall a prey to the forces that bring madness?

Sri Aurobindo: You had better read Vincent Smith; there you will find all the causes.

Disciple: You are not in a mood to reply. Would it be a very long reply?

Disciple: It would be a voluminous reply!

Disciple: I wanted to know not the ordinary causes but the subtle causes.

Sri Aurobindo: Maybe it is due to people leaving off eating bulls and calves. (*Laughter*)

Disciple: Today all my questions seem ill-timed.

Sri Aurobindo: Why? You seem to despise all my solutions today! (*Laughter*)

(*A pause of a few minutes*)

Sri Aurobindo: Among other things the Vaishnavite Sadhana has contributed to this madness in Yoga. They brought down the whole Sadhana into the emotional plane and they could not distinguish between the true emotional movement of the psychic and spiritual being and the vital and other lower parts which imitate it. It is that which gives room for all sorts of lower forces to enter.

This movement of restlessness and madness came to be accepted to such an extent that madness was almost regarded as another word for 'yoga'. *Pagol koré dao* — make me mad — was the aspiration! Of course, I am not speaking of the old Vaishnavism but

of the present-day forms.

Disciple: Even in Sri Chaitanya you see that weeping and dancing and even restlessness.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. It had already begun in his time.

The second thing is that our physical mind is not well developed. Being a dependent nation we have no scope for large action and therefore the development of our physical minds is poor. There must be something positive in the physical mind, an element that grasps at the Reality. In its own nature, the physical mind refuses to believe anything else except Matter to be real. There is the extreme case of X who used to switch off the electric light when he saw the Light descending in his inner being! Not that kind of thing, but some element of it is necessary so that the physical mind may question everything and accept only the Truth.

Some of these sadhaks see all kinds of visions. At times they see a buffalo and think that they have attained Siddhi! It never even once occurs to them to put the questions: "After all, what do these visions mean?" "What have I gained from them so far?" If you suggest these questions they brush them aside.

♑

30 JANUARY 1926

A disciple got fever which was suspected to be malarial. So the methods of cure were discussed.

Disciple: There is a method of resorting to Anushthan. In some cases they strike the head with a stone block or turn the beard etc. Is there any truth in these?

Sri Aurobindo: Why not? Anything — even a hammer — can cure if you have the faith.

Disciple: Is faith by itself sufficient?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes; even Coué's method is a combination of faith and will.

Disciple: Has Anushthan by itself no value ?

Sri Aurobindo: If you have no faith then certainly it has no value. If you have faith it may not be necessary. But if you have faith in Anushthan then it is necessary.

Disciple: But certain people cure by using a Mantra.

Sri Aurobindo: Mantra is something different from Anushthan. Generally, it is a vital force that is put in the Mantra, it is not psychic or spiritual in its nature.

Disciple: Are there no psychic or spiritual Mantras and do they not undergo change by being put to egoistic purposes?

Sri Aurobindo: The psychic is the psychic and remains the psychic, — it does its work. It does not fail, it does not try to play God as the vital and other forces do.

Disciple: Is Coué's method only an Anushthan?

Sri Aurobindo: As I told you before, it is the combination of will and faith. But that is not enough by itself. Repeating the same words ("Day by day, in every way, I am getting better and better.") is of the nature of an Anushthan. But there is a third something, I can't say what it is, which is necessary. That something automatically comes down when the conditions are ready.

I used to get fever and sometimes something would come down and reject it successfully, while at other times you have to go on working at one thing again and again. I have seen that the strongest faith does not succeed; you may have the strongest will and yet the cure may not be effected.

Not that faith is not necessary or the will is not useful. But they both require a third element on whose coming down — even if there is opposition — the thing gets done. Generally, the idea is that

one succeeds when the circumstances are favourable and when there is no strong opposition. But that is not always true.

When the third element is there then the opposition even does not matter, success invariably comes.

♑

4 FEBRUARY 1926

The subject this evening was the ideal of a perfect body which would be incorruptible.

Sri Aurobindo: The ideal is all right. But the physical being is not at all satisfactory — and one can't get over it by ignoring facts.

Disciple: Mahatma Gandhi in his autobiography refers to many experiments with the body. He holds that the world has to become fit to receive the Truth.

Sri Aurobindo: That is true. His autobiography will be a classical book in a line with the confessions of Rousseau and St. Augustine. But the question is whether his ideal is the Truth. That is to say, we must know whether we are on the right path when we advocate an ethical solution as final.

Then there was a turn in the conversation. A disciple asked about occult phenomena.

Disciple: There are cases of removal of flower-vases and movements of tables during occult stances. Are these things done by the power of suggestion?

Sri Aurobindo: No. The power of suggestion is not the explanation.

Disciple: The report is that there is a smoky path stretching from the medium to the object.

Sri Aurobindo: That is possible; there are various forms of Matter. What we know is the grossest form but there are other subtler ranges of Matter, and each form has its own properties. There are seven earths mentioned in Indian mythology; also according to the Veda there are three earths. King Kartavirya is reported to have conquered fourteen earths!

Disciple: Are there other bodies than the physical?

Sri Aurobindo: There is in fact no gap in man's sheaths. It is a gamut or scale ascending from the lowest to the highest plane; and the principle of each is repeated in all. Thus all is in each. Otherwise the world cannot go on. There are four other bodies different from this material physical body which we have.

Disciple: What happens when a man dies and his physical body disappears?

Sri Aurobindo: When a thing disappears it may go into the next plane which is not the gross material, but is physical all the same. So there is no question of dematerialisation.

Disciple: There is an idea of materialisation and dematerialisation in the case of occult phenomena. For instance, if a material object appears, and then disappears, what is the explanation?

Sri Aurobindo: But what is dematerialisation? In fact, we must ask: "What is Matter?" It is made of certain forces or a play of forces holding up, or maintaining, the physical form, is it not?

Disciple: In that case can we not speak of 'life' of an atom?

Sri Aurobindo: The explanation can be that when an object is made to disappear in the fourth dimension of space then it is dematerialisation and when it is put out from the fourth dimension into our space then it is materialisation, because then the object appears to us.

Disciple: But nowadays scientists speak of the selective power

of the atom; then can we not speak of 'life' of an atom?

Sri Aurobindo: Life *in* an atom. But these things one has to see with the inner eye.

Disciple: What is meant by seeing with the inner eye, and by bodies in the fourth dimension?

Sri Aurobindo: It is a way of saying; more easily you can feel it, that is, be conscious of it.

Disciple: Does one know them?

Sri Aurobindo: One feels them. Knowledge and consciousness are not the same thing. It is not formulated knowledge. It is rather a feeling.

Disciple: But one sees no sign of life in an atom.

Sri Aurobindo: J.C. Bose has shown there is what may be called 'fatigue' in metals and plants, and metals are sensitive to poisons.

Disciple: There is the reported case of the breaking of an iron rod by some subtle or occult force.

Sri Aurobindo: That is life-force: it acts on the life-force in the metal. But in the metal it is so mechanical and so different from what we ordinarily know as life that we can't call it 'life'.

Form is the most visible sign of life in the atom. So there is a tendency in the physical atom to throw away anything that would destroy the form: there is an effort to preserve the form.

Disciple: If we do not see any sign of life how can we say that there is life?

Sri Aurobindo: Life or life-consciousness is a relative term. Of course it is not like human life or even life in the vegetable kingdom.

Disciple: Then how to say that there is life or consciousness?

Sri Aurobindo: You can only experience it. If you enter into the universal consciousness which is common to all things then you can

feel the metal's parsimonious and spare manifestation of life. In Matter itself and around it you can feel this life and enter into it by identification with the universal spirit. When a blow is given to the table you can feel that you are struck — of course, you can speak of it metaphorically, you can't demonstrate it but you can identify yourself with it.

Disciple: How can one begin to feel this identification?

Sri Aurobindo: The first thing one sees when one has broken the barrier is the vital-physical body. It is around the physical body and with the physical it forms as it were the 'nervous envelope'. The force of a disease has to break through it to reach the body — except for the attacks on the most material parts.

You can then feel the disease coming and also feel in the nervous envelope the part of the body which it is going to, or intending to, attack because what is in the nervous envelope has a material counterpart in the body. Thus it is the vital-physical which is first attacked and then the force takes the form of a disease in the system.

I had myself the experience of fever all around the body.

Disciple: Should one be sensitive to these disturbances?

Sri Aurobindo: All disturbance and agitation is a sign of weakness. One must be stolid, and attend to the development of consciousness. No agitation — only feeling and knowledge.

Disciple: Is there continuity in Matter?

Disciple: And there is the same selection under the same conditions, so that it is mechanical only and there is no 'life'!

Sri Aurobindo: It has life — but it is life of quite another kind. There is consciousness in it also — but it is involved and works under mechanical laws and it is not individualised. In material objects there are physical forces trying to maintain the forms. But there is even some life-force gathered round the form by the

universal consciousness which is behind it.

Perhaps it even gets experience but the experience is not recorded. There is no growth, because there is no individualisation. And even that idea of individualisation is relative. You can say, "It has a kind of individuality." But relatively speaking it has none. Man is more individualised, though one can say he is not yet truly an individual, because the true individuality has not yet manifested.

20 DECEMBER 1938

After Sri Aurobindo's lunch, at about 4-30 p.m., I was reading to him the memorial orations on X, a prominent public man. One after another, beginning with the Governor, they had praised him in the most superlative terms, e.g. "upright", "honest", "a friend of the poor", etc.

Sri Aurobindo: Good Lord! (*Then, bursting into laughter*) X ought to be canonized Saint X! One can generalise the statement that all men are liars. Such is public life. When Y died, D and others who were life-long against him, did the same thing.

Later the talk turned to homeopathy, its dosage, its difference from allopathy etc.

Sri Aurobindo: Homeopathy is nearer to Yoga and allopathy is more mechanical. Homeopathy deals with the physical personality, the symptoms put together making up the physical personality, while allopathy goes by diagnosis which does not consider the personality. The action of homeopathy is more subtle and dynamic.

Disciple: Some Yogis go into Samadhi as a release from bodily pain and suffering. But there are those who don't do that and bear

the pain.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. Yogis can go into Samadhi and put an end to the sensations. But it is not necessary to have a disease in order to go into Samadhi. Besides, when one decides to bear it, it seems to me a way of accepting the disease. But I don't understand the utility of going into Samadhi to escape from pain.

Ramakrishna once said to Keshav Chandra Sen, when the former was seriously ill, that his body was breaking up under the stress of his spiritual development. But there is no necessity of having a disease for the sake of spiritual development.

Disciple: If Ramakrishna had the will he would have prevented the disease.

Sri Aurobindo: Oh yes. But he did not believe in such will, or prayer to the Divine to cure his disease.

Disciple: It is said that he got his cancer because of the sins of his disciples.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. He said so himself and, when he said that, it must be true. You know he is said to have given arguments for and against the view that the Guru has to take up many things of the disciples upon himself.

The Mother does that because she unites herself with the disciples; takes them up into herself. Of course, she at the same time stops also many things from happening in herself. A famous Yogi told a disciple of his when he was becoming a Guru, "In addition to your own difficulties you are taking up those of others." Of course, if one cuts the connection with the disciples then that can't happen but that means no work and the sadhaks are left: to themselves without support.

This sort of interchange is very common. Wherever two persons meet, the interchange is going on. In that way one contracts a disease from another without any infection by germs. N was

conscious of what he was receiving from others and did not care to think about what he was passing to them. Not only that, he even thought he had power for good or for evil. Bad thoughts may affect others. That is why Buddha used to emphasise right thought etc. You find some people cannot do without meeting others. What is after all the passion of man and woman for each other? Nothing but this vital interchange, this drawing in of forces from each other. When a woman has a need of someone else, that means she is in need of a vital force from him. Woman and man running after each other means this interchange or drawing. Of course, it takes place unconsciously; even in ordinary life when a person does not like another he does not know the reason but it means that their vital beings don't agree. You know the lines:

I do not like thee, Doctor Fell,
The reason why I cannot tell.

One may not know exactly if it is the incapacity of the vital or disagreement. You see people — men and women — quarrelling violently with each other and yet they can't do without each other; that is because each has a need of the vital force from the other. Of course the need has been imposed on the woman by man. Woman has almost always such a necessity. That is what is called being in love. In all societies they established the husband-and-wife relation so that this exchange and interchange may be limited to each other and an equation may be established.

Disciple: But if one draws more, then there is a risk.

Sri Aurobindo: Of course. If one receives more than what he gives then there may be bad consequences for the other. You know what Hindu Astrology says about Rakshasa Yoga: A husband who loses many wives one after another means that instead of supporting them he is eating them up.

Disciple: What are vampires?

Sri Aurobindo: Those who constatldy draw from others' vital

beings without giving anything in return we call vampires.

Disciple: Are they so by nature or owing to some possession?

Sri Aurobindo: May be either. There are men vampires as there are women vampires. There is also the vital which is expansive in its nature. In such a case one has the need of pouring out the vital force. But there is again another kind of expansive vital which is the Hitlerian vital, catching hold of other people and keeping them under ones grip.

Disciple: Is psychic love of that nature?

Sri Aurobindo: Of course not. The law of the psychic is to give without making any demand.

21 DECEMBER 1938

Disciple: There was a time when barbers occupied a respectable place in medicine.

Sri Aurobindo: Why, during the middle ages, it seems, most of the surgeons were barbers. (*After a pause*) I understand there are Kavirajas, physicians, who can, by examining the pulse, state the physical condition and the disease of the patient.

Disciple: No one has seen these claims demonstrated. I have heard of some remarkable *Nāḍi*, pulse, specialists who can even say what the patient had eaten a few days ago. (*Laughter*) Can we accept these claims?

Sri Aurobindo: Why not? How do you know they are not correct? Many sciences are built up by experience and intuition. They are handed down by tradition; for example, the Chinese method of treatment by finding and pricking the nerve-centres.

Disciple: It is said of Dhanvantari, the father of Ayurveda, that

he came to know the medicinal properties of plants by intuition. He would, it seems, stand before a plant and question the plant and it would reveal its properties to him.

Sri Aurobindo (*smiling*)**:** He was the physician of the Gods and so nothing is unnatural for him. (*Laughter*)

(*After a pause*) Ayurveda is the first system of medicine; it originated in India. Medicine, mathematical notations and astrology all went from India to Arabia, and from there they travelled to Greece. The three humours of which Hippocrates and Galen speak are an Indian idea.

Disciple: At Calcutta and other places they are trying to start Ayurvedic schools. I think it is good. It will be a combination of Eastern and Western systems, especially of Western anatomy and surgery.

Sri Aurobindo: Why! Anatomy and surgery were known to Indians. There were many surgical instruments in India. For an ancient system like the Ayurveda I doubt if the modern method of teaching would do. Modern methods make the whole subject too mental, too intellectual, while the ancient systems were more intuitional. These subjects used to be handed down from Guru to disciple. The same is true of Yoga. One can't think of schools and colleges and studies of Yoga. That would be an American idea. The centre of Yoga teaching in America has been holding classes and giving lectures and courses.

Disciple: Perhaps Hatha Yoga can be taught that way.

Sri Aurobindo: Even that would be only the external part.

25 DECEMBER 1938

Doctor X insisted on removing the splints that were attached to Sri

Aurobindo's fractured thigh but all those who were in attendance could not assent to his proposal. At last the doctor departed leaving the question to be decided by Sri Aurobindo.

Sri Aurobindo: I do not want to take a risk. I have to be careful as I am not sure that some violent movement would not take place in sleep. And there are the adverse forces to be considered. The specialist says ten weeks, Dr. X says six; so we will take a *via media* that will satisfy both.

Disciple: Dr. X always emphasises that you are an extraordinary patient who can be trusted to follow directions.

Sri Aurobindo: In that case I have to take extraordinary care.

(*After an interval of silence during which the Mother came and departed for meditation, Sri Aurobindo himself continued*)

It seems the doctors are born to differ. Medical science has developed much knowledge but in application it is either an art or a fluke.

Disciple: Perhaps it has not attained exactness in its application because of individual variation.

Sri Aurobindo: They have not found any drug that can be called specific for a particular disease, — I am thinking of allopathy. I know nothing about homeopathy. Even in theory, which they have developed remarkably, there is always a change. What they hold true today is discarded as invalid after ten years. A French doctor has proved with statistics that T. B. is not a contagious disease. He says it is hereditary. I myself have not found it contagious. Or, take diet — they are changing their ideas constantly about it.

Disciple: Besides uncertainty of the medicine and treatment, there are doctors who are incapable and even unscrupulous. I think that the medical profession should be under State control.

Sri Aurobindo: I don't believe in that. I like State control less than a Medical Council's control.

Disciple: Something like the action of the County Council in London would be desirable. There a regular medical check-up is enjoined.

Sri Aurobindo: What about the poor yogis who may not like being examined?

Disciple: The nationalisation of medical service is envisaged. Patients of a particular locality are placed under the charge of a doctor and it appears they can't change the doctor without sufficient reason.

Sri Aurobindo: If the patient has no faith in the doctor, or if he does not like him?

Disciple: That is not a sufficient reason, for the Council sees that all the doctors are well-trained.

Sri Aurobindo: Why not? It is an excellent reason. Why should there be no choice? You may as well ask a patient to be under our doctor X and not go to Y. I have no faith in government controls because I believe in a certain amount of freedom — freedom to find out things for oneself in ones own way, even freedom to commit blunders. Nature leads us through various errors and mistakes. When Nature created the human being with all his possibilities of errors and mistakes she knew very well what she was about. Freedom for experiment in human life is a great thing. Without the freedom to take risk and commit mistakes there can be no progress.

Disciple: But without sufficient growth of consciousness one may abuse the freedom.

Sri Aurobindo: One must take the risk. Growth of consciousness cannot come without freedom. You can, of course, have certain elementary laws, and develop sanitation, spread knowledge of health and hygiene among the people. The State can provide medical aid certainly, but when one goes beyond ones province then the error comes in. To say that one can't change ones doctor, it seems to me, is a little too much. In Indian spirituality they have

allowed all sorts of experiments including Vama Marga, and you see how wonderfully it has developed.

Mechanisation has begun from the pressure exerted by the developments of the physical sciences in which one can be exact, precise and where everything is mechanical. It is tried and found to be all right so far as physical things are concerned because, if you make a mistake there, Nature knocks you on the nose and you are compelled to see your error. But the moment you deal with Life and Mind, you cannot apply the same rules. If you apply them then you may go on committing mistakes and never know it. You fail to see this because of a fixed idea which tries to fit in everything according to its own conception.

Everything is moving towards that in Europe. The totalitarian States do not believe in any individual variation and even other non-totalitarian States are obliged to follow them. They do it for the sake of efficiency. It is the efficiency of the State as an organisation, the machine, and not of the individual. The individual has no freedom. He does not grow. Organise by all means but there must be scope for freedom and plasticity.

Disciple: Bernard Shaw justified the Abyssinian conquest by Italy by saying that there was danger to human life while passing through the Dankal desert.

Sri Aurobindo: In that case, let him keep out of the desert. What business has he to go through the desert?

Disciple: The idea is that Italy will bring a new culture to Abyssinia, — roads and other features of modern civilisation.

Sri Aurobindo: You think the Abyssinians and Negroes have no art and no culture? Of course, if you walk into a Negro den they might kill you. But the same thing is being done in Germany! How many people in England are aesthetically developed? And about buildings and roads, looking at life in Port Said, could anyone say that the people there are more civilised than the Negroes? Have you

read Phanindra Nath Bose's book on the Santhals? He shows that the Santhals are not at all inferior to other classes of Indians in ethics. So also about the Arabian races. Mr. Blunt praises them very highly as a sympathetic and honest people. Do you think that the average man of today is far better than a Greek two thousand years ago, or to an Indian of those times? Look at the condition of Germany today. You can't say that it is progressing.

I have come in contact with the Indian masses and found them better than the Europeans of the same class. They are superior to the European working-class. The latter may be more efficient but that is due to other reasons. The Governor here remarked during riots that the labourers are very docile and humble; only when they take to drink they become violent. The Irish doctor who was in Alipore jail could not imagine how the young men who were so gentle and attractive could be revolutionaries. I found even the ordinary criminal quite human and better than his counterpart in Europe.

There will always remain different states of development of humanity. It is a fallacy to say that education will do everything. Our civilisation is not an unmixed good. You have only to look at civilised races in Europe. What is the state of affairs in Nazi Germany? It is terrible. It is extremely difficult for an individual to assert himself. All are living in a state of tension. In that tension either the whole structure will break down with a crash, or all life will be crushed out of the people. In both cases the result is a disaster.

Society is after all reverting to the old system, — only in a different form. There is a revival of the old system of monarchy with an aristocracy and the mass. There is the Führer or the leader, that is to say, the king. You have thus the sovereign man, his party — the aristocracy, the chosen — and the general mass. The same is the case with Fascism and Communism. Only the Brahmin class — the intellectuals — have no place.

It is curious how a thing gets spoiled when it gets recognition.

Democracy was something better when it was not called democracy. When the name is given the truth of it seems to go out.

Disciple: X used to be a great admirer of Socialism. He used to say it is heaven without a god.

Sri Aurobindo: Why didn't he go there? If he had gone there he would have been suppressed. I had foreseen that socialism would take away all freedom of the individual.

Disciple: Is there any difference between Communism and Nazism?

Sri Aurobindo: Practically none. The Nazis call themselves National Socialists while the others are mere Socialists; in Communism it is a proletarian government and there are no separate classes. The Nazis have kept the classes, only they are all bound to the State, everything is under State-control just as in Communism.

Disciple: But Communism began with a high ideal and it must be better than Fascism or Nazism.

Sri Aurobindo: In which way better? Formerly people were unconscious slaves; now under Communism they are conscious slaves. In the former regime they could resort to a strike when they were dissatisfied, now they can't. The main question is whether the people have freedom or not. But they are bound to the State, the dictator and the party. They can't even choose the dictator. And whoever differs from them is mercilessly suppressed. You know the way they are doing it.

Disciple: But with the abolition of class-distinction there is now perhaps a sense of equality among all — nobody is superior or inferior.

Sri Aurobindo: How? At first the leaders, the generals and others went to run the machines and industrial organisations in Russia. But they found it was not possible; then they had to bring in

specialists and pay them highly. The condition of the working class in Russia is no better than that of the similar class in England or France. They certainly have done some good things with regard to women and children, and about medical help. But that is being done in many other countries like France and England.

Disciple: Why are people like Romain Rolland so enthusiastic about Russia?

Sri Aurobindo: Probably because they are Socialists. But they are getting disillusioned. Plenty of French workers went to Russia and came back disappointed. The same thing had happened when democracy had come. People thought there would be plenty of liberty, but they found it was a delusion.

Disciple: But formerly they were serving the Emperor and now they serve their own people.

Sri Aurobindo: Certainly not, — where did you get that idea from? The Emperor had nothing to do with the government. It was the capitalist class that ruled the country. The same is the case today whatever name one may give. The whole thing — whatever its name — is a fraud. It is impossible to change humanity by political machinery — it can't be done.

30 DECEMBER 1938

The subject of the talk was homeopathy.

Disciple: I am puzzled to think how such infinitesimal doses in dilution can act on the human system.

Sri Aurobindo: That is no puzzle to me. Sometimes the infinitesimal is more powerful than the mass; it approaches more and more the subtle state and from the physical goes into a dynamic

or vital state and acts vitally.

In the evening a letter from a disciple describing vividly his feeling of being persecuted was read.

Disciple: Is it a case of possession?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. It is the possession of the nervous system and vital system and vital mind. It is not like insanity. It is very difficult to convince these people that their ideas of persecution are false. There are two types: one imagines all sorts of things, — 80 per cent of the cases are of this type; and the other twists everything.

My brother Manmohan had this persecution mania; he was always in fear of something terrible happening to him. He used to think that the British Government was going to arrest him!

Disciple: But he was a very successful professor; I heard that people used to listen to his lectures with rapt attention.

Sri Aurobindo: He was very painstaking; most of the professors don't work hard. I saw that his books used to be interleaved and marked and full of notes.

(*Looking at X*) I was not so conscientious a professor.

Disciple: But people who heard you in College and those who heard you afterwards in politics differ from you. They speak very highly of your lectures.

Sri Aurobindo: I never used to look at the notes and sometimes my explanations did not agree with them at all. I was professor of English and for some time of French. What was surprising to me was that the students used to take down everything verbatim and mug it up by heart. Such a thing would never have happened in England.

Disciple: But we did that in England!

Sri Aurobindo: Did what?

Disciple: Take notes and mug them up.

Sri Aurobindo: You can take notes and utilise them in your own way.

Disciple: No, that was not the case. We used to take down everything verbatim because the professors used to bring in many theories and recent discoveries. Besides, each professor had his own fad.

Sri Aurobindo: It may be so in medicine, there is not much scope for original thinking. But in the arts it is not like that. You listen to the lectures, take notes if you like and then make what you can of them. There was always a demand for the students point of view.

The students at Baroda, besides taking my notes, used to get notes of other professors from Bombay, especially if any of them was an examiner. Once I was giving a lecture on Southey's *Life of Nelson*, and my lecture was not in agreement with the notes. So the students remarked that it was not at all like what was found in them. I replied that I had not read the notes; in any case they were all rubbish. I could never go into minute details. I read and left my mind to do what it could. That is why I could never become a scholar. Up to the age of fifteen I was known as a very promising scholar at St. Paul's. Thereafter I lost that reputation. The teachers used to say that I was lazy and was deteriorating.

Disciple: How was that?

Sri Aurobindo: Because I was reading novels and poetry. Only at the time of the examination I used to prepare a little. When, now and then, I used to write Greek and Latin verse my teachers used to lament that I was not utilising my remarkable gifts because of my laziness.

When I went on scholarship to King's College, Cambridge, Oscar Browning remarked that he had not seen such remarkable papers before. So, you see, in spite of all laziness I was not

deteriorating.

Disciple: Was there a prejudice against Indians at that time?

Sri Aurobindo: No. There was no distinction between an Englishman and an Indian. Only the lower class people used to shout "Blackie, Blackie." But it was just the beginning. It was brought by Anglo-Indians and Englishmen retiring from the colonies. It is a result of Democracy, I suppose. But among cultured Englishmen it was unknown and they treated us as equals.

But in France one never heard of such prejudices. Once some Paris hotel-manager, pressed by ten Americans, asked some Negroes to leave the hotel. I don't know if you have read the story in the papers. As soon as it came to the Presidents notice, he sent an order that if the hotel proprietor did that his hotel license would be cancelled. They have Negro governors and officers, taxi-drivers, etc. There was a Senegalese deputy who used to designate the governors. I wonder why they have never appointed any Indian deputy in Pondicherry. The English have a certain liberality and common sense.

Disciple: Liberality?

Sri Aurobindo: By liberality I don't mean generosity but a sort of freedom of consciousness and a certain fairness. Because of these, along with their public spirit, there is not such confusion in public life in England as in France or in America. The English can vehemently criticise one another in the press — even personally — but that does not affect their private relationship. You have seen how Brailsford has attacked Chamberlain; but their friendship, or private relations, won't be affected by that.

Disciple: That might be only for show.

Sri Aurobindo: No, it is quite genuine and there is a great freedom of speech in England.

Disciple: Vivekananda said that it is difficult to make friends

with an Englishman, but once the friendship is made it lasts a life-time.

Sri Aurobindo: Quite true.

Disciple: Jean Herbert says that the Japanese are also like that. They are very polite and formal but once you can make friends they are very good friends.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. The Japanese are very polite in their manners and conduct, they don't admit you to their private life. They have a wonderful power of self-control. They don't lose their temper or quarrel with you; but if their honour is violated they may kill you. They can be bitter enemies. And where honour is concerned, if they do not kill you, they may kill themselves at your door. For instance, if a Japanese killed himself at an Englishman's door it would be impossible for the latter to live there any more. Even in crime the Japanese have a strange sense of values. If a robber entered a house and the householder told him that he required some money, the robber would part with some of it; but if he said that he had a debt of honour to pay, then the robber would leave all the money and go away. Imagine such a housebreaker in England or America! The Japanese also have a high sense of chivalry. In the Russo-Japanese war when the Russians were defeated the Mikado almost shed tears thinking of the Czar of Russia! That was his sense of chivalry.

When a congregation of fifty thousand persons was caught in a fire due to an earthquake there was not a single cry, not a mutter. All men were standing up and chanting a Buddhist hymn. That is a heroic people with wonderful self-control.

Disciple: If they have such self-control they would be very good at Yoga.

Sri Aurobindo: Ah, self-control alone is not enough for Yoga. They are more an ethical race; their rules are extremely difficult to follow.

But these things perhaps belong to the past. It is a great pity that people who have carried such ideals into practice are losing them through contact with European civilisation. That is a great harm that European vulgarising has done to Japan. Now you find most people mercantile in their outlook and they will do anything for the sake of money.

Nakashima's mother when she returned from America to Japan — as is the custom with the Japanese — was so horrified to see the present-day Japan that she went back to America! That the Japanese are not a spiritual race can be seen from the case of H, who was a great patriot and full of schemes for the future, but at the same time did not like the modern trends of Japan. He used to say: "My psychic being has become a traitor."

Disciple: Have you read Noguchi's letter to Tagore defending Japans aggression?

Sri Aurobindo: No. But there are always two sides to a question. I don't believe in such shouts against Imperialism. Conquests of that sort were, at one time, regarded as a normal activity of political life; now you do it under some pretensions and excuses. Almost every nation does it. What about China herself? She took Kashgar in the same way. The very name Kashgar shows that the Chinese have no business to be there. Apart from the new fashions of killing there is nothing wrong in war. It is the Anglo-Saxon hypocrisy that cries out against it; the French don't.

Disciple: It is said of the French that they don't usually lose their head, but when they lose it they lose it well.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, the Indian also was considered docile and mild like the elephant, but once he is off the line you better keep out of his way.

Now there is a new morality in the air. They talk of pacifism, anti-nationalism, anti-militarism, etc. But it is talked of by those who can't do anything. In any case, it has to stand the test of time.

Disciple: J used to be wild when England began to shout against Italy's war on Abyssinia. Of course, J does not defend Italy, but England should be the last nation to speak against it.

Sri Aurobindo: Quite so. England was the only country that defended air-bombing because the English wanted to kill the Pathans.

Disciple: Has European civilisation nothing good in it?

Sri Aurobindo: It has lowered the moral tone of humanity. Of course, it has brought hygiene, sanitation, etc. Even nineteenth-century civilisation with its defects was better than this. Europe could not stand the test of the last war.

The ancients tried to keep to their ideals and made an effort to raise them higher, while Europe lost all her ideals after the war. People have become cynical, selfish, etc. What you hear of postwar England, postwar Germany, is not all wrong. Have you not heard Arjava inveighing against postwar England? I suppose it is all due to commercialism.

10 JANUARY 1939

Disciple: My friend X has begun to give medicine to some of my patients.

Sri Aurobindo: So, you have your "homeo-allo" alliance or axis!

(*Talk on homeopathy was going on when the Mother came*.)

Mother: Do you know about a school of homeopathy in Switzerland which is very famous in Europe? It prepares medicines also. They have books in which symptoms are grouped together and remedies are indicated for a group of symptoms. It is a very convenient method; only, you have to have the book, or a good

memory. But are you allowed to practise homeopathy without a licence?

Disciple: Oh, yes. No licence is required in India.

Disciple: But Dr. S was saying that using high potencies might harm, or even kill, the patient. It is dangerous if everybody begins to practise it, they say.

Disciple: In Bengal it is practised everywhere.

Sri Aurobindo: Is Unani medicine practised in India?

Disciple: Yes, in cities where there is a Mohamedan population, and in the Muslim states. In Delhi there is the Tibbia College founded by Hakim Ajmal Khan. It seems it is the only school of Unani medicine in the whole of Asia. Students from Turkey, Egypt and Afghanistan used to come there to learn. Ajmal Khan was the direct descendant of the Court Hakim to the Mogul Emperors. From where is their system derived?

Sri Aurobindo: It is from the Greek school. They use animal products and salts. Besides curing, which is common to all the systems, the Unani lays claim to rejuvenating the human organism. Many diseases which require an operation for their cure in allopathy are cured by Unani and Ayurvedic medicines without an operation.

There were many specific cures known in India but I am afraid they are getting lost. I remember the case of Jyotindra Nath Banerji who had a remedy for sterility from a Sannyasi and he used it with success. Many cases of barrenness for ten or fifteen years were cured within a short time. The directions for taking the medicine were to be very scrupulously observed. He knew also a remedy for hydrocele.

Mother: Do you know about Chinese medicine? Once they had a rule that you paid the doctor so long as you were well. All payment stopped when one became ill, and if the patient died they used to

put a mark on the doctors door to show that his patient had died.

But the Chinese method of pricking the nerve and curing the disease is very remarkable. The idea is that there is a point of the nerve where the attack of the disease is concentrated by the attacking force and if you prick the point, or, as they say, the Devil on the head, the disease is cured. They find out this nervous point from the indications that the patient gives, or sometimes they find out by themselves also.

Disciple: I do not think that any system of medicine can succeed in curing all diseases. I believe that only yogic power can cure all diseases.

Disciple: Even that is not unconditional; otherwise, it might be very nice. There are conditions to be fulfilled for the yogic power to succeed.

Sri Aurobindo: Do you expect that the yogic power or consciousness will simply say, "Let there be no disease", and there will be no disease?

Disciple: Not that way. But cases of miraculous cures are known, that is, cures effected without any conditions.

Sri Aurobindo: That is another matter. Otherwise, the Yogi has only to get up every morning and say, "Let everybody in the world be all right" and there would be no disease in the world!

♌

25 AUGUST 1939

Disciple: The Jain books speak of Trikal Jnana, practical omniscience. If one has this power one can know how a thing happened. One can know how the accident happened to you.

Sri Aurobindo: It is a question of changing the Subconscient, for

it holds everything in itself. All diseases, all habits, in fact everything we call 'Nature' resides in it. It is the basis of all these things.

Disciple: But how could the accident happen?

Sri Aurobindo: It was because I was unguarded and something forced its way into the subconscient. There is a stage in yogic advance when the least negligence would not do.

Disciple: But how can the knee-joint be cured by the Higher Force?

Sri Aurobindo: The right kind of Force does not come down on the knee-joint. If it came it would be cured.

Disciple: Do you feel the dark forces?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes.

Disciple: Do they try to prevent the recovery?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes.

Disciple: There is a belief that the reactions of certain actions are unavoidable: that is to say, one has to bear the consequences in the physical, one can't avoid them. I heard that the Mother told A that the incurable defect in his leg could be cured by the descent of the Supramental Power. Is it possible?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, by the descent of the Supramental Power into A, not into anybody else.

Disciple: But in that case the Supramental descent can change stones and metals.

Sri Aurobindo: In stones and metals there is no mind which requires to be changed. It is not so difficult to effect a change in them. So if the Supermind descends into you it will do. There is no need to solve all problems.

Disciple: But it must take place in you first. If it happens what changes will it bring about?

Sri Aurobindo: My work is to fix it in the earth-consciousness and its establishment in me would be a part of it. It would make its descent possible in others also.

Disciple: We hear that in ancient times the great Siddhas used to cure the sickness of others by mere touch. Ramakrishna even gave yogic experience by a touch.

Sri Aurobindo: There are different kinds of powers by which these things are done — they are miracles. But the power to perform miracles is not necessarily a sign of spirituality. In this Yoga we leave things to the Divine; if these powers come as a part of the Divine movement then they have a place.

Disciple: Are there not Karmas the results of which are unavoidable? Even Buddha and the Tirthankars had to undergo the results of their karmas done in their past lives. Can it be said in your case that the accident was the result of Utkata Karma?

Sri Aurobindo: I don't think so. For me it is a part of the fight against the forces of Ignorance and against the hostile forces.

Disciple: Your foot slipped on the tiger-skin. Now, suppose you had beaten a tiger in your past life with a stick, then it may give you a fractured leg this time.

Disciple: Or you might have shot it.

Sri Aurobindo: No. Then it would come and kill me this time.

The Law of Karma is not mathematical or mechanical: Certain energies are put forward and certain results tend to be produced. Karma is not the fundamental law of consciousness. The basic law is spiritual. Karma is a secondary machinery to help the consciousness to grow by experience. The laws of being are primarily spiritual. It is quite possible to eliminate the Karmic force — it is not absolute. It is the mind that formulates these laws; and the mind always tries to put them as absolute.

Disciple: Can one say that the accident has done 'good'?

Sri Aurobindo: I have advanced very much further after November last. I have found time to write some books; and now I get more time to concentrate.

Disciple: Have the disciples made progress during this period?

Sri Aurobindo: Even D who formerly could not believe in the silent working of the Power now says that the stopping of Pranams has made the silent work more possible. All the time was taken in writing letters.

Disciple: D always wanted you to write books.

Sri Aurobindo: Not only that, he wanted me to write more poetry and more letters to him. (*Laughter*)

There is a great change in him since that time.

♓

20 MARCH 1943

A devotee who was suffering from cancer died.

Disciple: Do you think that R could have been cured? Most people believe that cancer is incurable.

Sri Aurobindo: It was possible in his case, at least; but something in him ceased to respond after the February Darshan. The last three days his body did not respond either to the Force put upon him, or to the medicine given.

Disciple: Could not the spiritual help be effective irrespective of his response?

Sri Aurobindo: In cases like this the entire collaboration of the person concerned is absolutely necessary.

Disciple: But if you know the force that is attacking?

Sri Aurobindo: To detect the force that is attacking is one thing

and to drive it out is another. In these cases the mind plays a very great part. R had made up his mind that he would wait for the Darshan and die afterwards. Besides when he came here the disease was very much advanced.

Disciple: What are the conditions for success in such cases?

Sri Aurobindo: Either entire collaboration or complete passivity. These are the two conditions for a cure.

Disciple: Do you think Dr. A's homeopathic treatment could have prolonged his life?

Sri Aurobindo: He would have probably finished him earlier.

ଓ

19 JULY 1943

Disciple: A has written to someone in Bengal that the vital being in man is responsible for diseases and that the body has no part in it. What do you think of it?

Sri Aurobindo: You can say Matter knows nothing about good and bad or sick and healthy. But the human body, I mean the physical consciousness, is not Matter. It is conscious, and therefore it can have its own responsibility with regard to diseases.

Disciple: It seems A's standpoint referred to repentance and expiation. He wanted to say that to punish the body for the faults of the vital being or of the mind was to punish John for Jack.

Sri Aurobindo: One may differ on that point too. To consider as if the body, the vital and the mind were so cut off from each other as not to have any mutual reaction is not true. So the physical too can react on the vital being.

Disciple: But the physical being in us is not as conscious as the vital or the mental being.

Sri Aurobindo: The physical may be said to be more unconscious than the other parts, but that would not prevent it from exerting a very powerful influence on the other parts.

Besides, the decision to fast, or to do physical Tapasya, is taken by the vital and the mental being in man. It is not the body that takes the decision.

Disciple: But in the psychological paths of Yoga physical Tapasya is not regarded as necessary.

Sri Aurobindo: The reason why physical Tapasya, or mortification of the flesh, is not considered effective or is discouraged, is that by itself it is not sufficient to bring about a change in the vital or in the mind. You may do Tapasya all right and yet the vital may remain absolutely unchanged.

Such a change can be more easily brought about by the consciousness acting directly without resorting to physical means. Consciousness has a more direct means of bringing about the required change.

There is another reason for this discouragement. Physical Tapasya, when properly done, brings about a great increase in energy, and then the result of it depends upon who takes hold of the energy. Generally it is seen that wrong forces take hold of this energy. In exceptional cases only can one go through without disaster.

The root of the whole trouble is in the subconscient, and so the difficulty arises from there.

But if the Tapasya is taken up by the consciousness — say, by some part of the consciousness like the vital, then it can effect the necessary change.

ON ART

22 JUNE 1924

An article on Modern Indian Painting by O. C. Gangooly.

Sri Aurobindo: It is very well written and is illuminating. But I don't understand why he says that those who are not acquainted with Indian subjects would not understand Nandalal's Shiva paintings. He seems to suggest that knowledge of the Puranic tradition would help in appreciating his works. But one need not know all traditions to appreciate art.

Disciple: We do not have to know Christian traditions in order to appreciate European art. This article is perhaps in answer to adverse criticism by someone who said that there is no art in the new art-school in Bengal.

Sri Aurobindo: Nobody need answer ignorant criticism. In Europe itself there is a radical departure from Realism, and all bondage to tradition has disappeared.

♑

26 JANUARY 1926

We were showing an art journal published from Andhra. On seeing some of the reproductions Sri Aurobindo made the following remarks:

Sri Aurobindo: The further you go back in time the greater the grandeur you meet in the conception. The nearer you come to our time the more the art becomes great in detail. Even up to the time of the Delvada temples something of the old culture was living. One must bring the tide back.

Disciple: But why is it gone?

Sri Aurobindo: That is the law. You can't have the creative spirit always at the height.

Disciple: What we require is the reawakening of the Spirit, it is not necessary to have the same or similar form or style.

Sri Aurobindo: In spirituality, in the arts, in poetry, you find the same foundation in old times. You find a certain 'calm strength' founded on the Spirit, and all expression proceeds on the basis of that calm strength. In modern art as soon as you begin to give place to, or substitute, vital fantasies and other elements instead of that calm strength you find that art deteriorates. It becomes an effort, a straining to express, it becomes artificial and even vulgar. In ancient times they expressed what they had and were. The Upanishads have not been rivalled since because of their calm strength.

In a way, the same thing applies to Yoga also. For example, my objection to the present-day Vaishnavite method of Sadhana is that it gives too much of an opening to the demoralising spirit of the vital world.

Disciple: But is there no truth in this Vaishnavite method?

Sri Aurobindo: Not that there is no truth in it; but it is lacking in that calm strength of the Spirit. For instance, why should a man put on a sari because he feels Radha-Bhava? Let him feel it and realise it within. But that way of bringing down a law of another plane to the plane where another law holds, and trying to impose it there, introduces a falsehood. That is to say, even the truth in it is turned into a falsehood.

♑

Disciple: Do you find signs of decadence in the art of painting?

Sri Aurobindo: I do not find any sign of decadence; only, in old times they had grandeur; as you come nearer to our times you find they do finer and more delicate work. For example, late Rajput painting, the fundamental spirit is the same in it. Formerly it was thought that there was a gulf between Ajanta and the Rajput School of painting, but the Nepalese, the Tibetan and Central Asian finds of painting prove the continuity of Indian art. Almost in every culture one sees that in earlier times there is grandeur of conception, while later on it becomes more conscious and vital, — detailed and delicate in expression.

(*After a pause*) Did you refer to the dictionary to find out whether Chaitya Purusha can mean the psychic being, the soul?

Disciple: I did, but the word is not given there in that sense; it only carries the sense of Chaitya of the Buddhists and the Jains.

Sri Aurobindo: That is quite another meaning. But what about this one?

Disciple: But you have yourself used it in the *Arya* at two places.

Sri Aurobindo: How is that? Where?

Disciple: In *The Synthesis of Yoga*, in the fourth chapter about the Four Aids; you have mentioned there Chaitya Guru, the inner guide.

Disciple: In Vaishnavite literature it means the portion — Amsha — of the Divine which guides a man. It is called Chaitya Guru.

Sri Aurobindo: I wanted to know if the word has a fixed connotation. If it has not, then one can use the word Chaitya Purusha for the psychic being. It has the advantage of carrying both the functions of the psychic being: it is the direct portion of the Divine in the human and it is also the being that is behind the

Chitta.

Disciple: There is an idea of publishing some of your old writings.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, the other day I was looking over the *Karmayogin* series with an idea of correcting it, and it seemed to me as if somebody else had written it!

Disciple: What do you mean by "somebody else"?

Disciple: Perhaps he means not his present self but some past personality which is now gone or absorbed.

Sri Aurobindo: It is always very disappointing to read ones own writing. One feels how ignorant one was!

Disciple: But the writing can be recast, though it might mean a lot of labour.

Sri Aurobindo: Do you mean to say that I have not written enough?

Disciple: Did you read the last issue of *Rupam*? There O. C. Gangooly says that he has found the reason for the Mithuna — a pair of male and female figures — being kept in the temples in India.[11]

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, I saw the article. Did you read the quotation at the end?

Disciple: Yes, I read it, but it does not say why it is to be there.

Sri Aurobindo: I think he says at one place that it typifies the male and the female — the Purusha and the Prakriti — aspect without which there is no creation.

But at one place he speaks of the Mithuna verging on the obscene. But I did not see anything of that in the illustrations.

[11] In his editorial article "The Mithuna in Indian Art" (*Rupam*, April-July, 1925) Gangooly quotes (p. 60) the phrase "Mithunaih Vibhushayet" — decorate with couples — from *Prasāda Lakshanam*, 105, Shloka 30 (*Bibliotheca Indica*, Calcutta, 1873, p. 356). The phrase occurs in Agni Purana.

Disciple: No, there are no such illustrations; but I think he has not given the worst ones. They are at Puri and Konarak they say.

Sri Aurobindo: Has anyone seen them?

You know, Gangooly wanted me to recast the chapters on Architecture and Sculpture,[12] cut out the strictures on William Archer and give the remainder serially in *Rupam.*

Disciple: Why cut the strictures out?

Sri Aurobindo: Because, he said, Archer need not be answered. Of all the chapters on Indian Art I think those on Architecture and Sculpture are the best. While writing the chapter on Painting I was tired and besides I have a great natural predilection for the other two arts. Appreciation of painting I cultivated afterwards; I acquired it — I had not got it by nature as that of the other two arts. And even then, in painting I have to get at the spirit and I can get at it but I do not know about the technique. In architecture also I do not know the technical terms but yet I can seize on the spirit.

Disciple: You have dwelt on sculpture, architecture and painting, but you have left music to sing for itself.

Sri Aurobindo: You may as well ask me to write about trigonometry! (*Laughter*) I can get at the spirit of the singer and catch the emotion; but in appreciating that art that is not enough.

(*After some time*) In these matters of natural predilections, we have an element from our past lives; one always brings something from the past.

I got my true taste for painting in Alipore Jail. I used to meditate there and I saw various pictures with colours during meditations and then the critical faculty also arose in me. What I mean is that I did not know intellectually about painting but I caught the spirit of it.

---

[12] In *A Defence of Indian Culture*, subsequently published under the title *The Foundations of Indian Culture*.

♓

31 MARCH 1926

An album of Abanindranath Tagore came and was shown to Sri Aurobindo.

Sri Aurobindo: Are these pictures of Abanindranath his latest ones? They have given me a peculiar impression.

Disciple: They are his paintings and portraits since 1923. Do you find that he has deteriorated?

Sri Aurobindo: No. But they all seem to be from the vital world. Of course, all Abanindranath's paintings are from the vital world. But this time they appear to come from a peculiar layer of the vital plane. I felt something like that vaguely, so I asked the Mother and she pointed out that it was the colouring which was responsible for the feeling or impression.

Disciple: We have many paintings of Nandalal dealing with Puranic subjects. But I find one or two are failures.

Sri Aurobindo: In Nandalal's paintings you find the background of a strong mental conception, while Abanindranath's paintings are from the vital world.

I would like to see some of his earlier works. My idea is that in Abanindra's case the inspiration from Ajanta is not so strong as that of the Moghul and Rajput schools.

Disciple: Of late he has been leaning more towards the Moghul school. Besides, he has been changing his technique so often that it is very difficult to say which style has really impressed him. His subjects may be such as to suggest Mahommedan influence.

Sri Aurobindo: I do not think that the impression is due to the subject at all. It is due to the peculiar layer of the vital plane to which the pictures belong. For instance, take his "Bride of Shiva". It

is an Indian, a Hindu, subject. But it is *not* the bride of Shiva at all in his painting. If at all it is Shiva's bride, it is the bride of Pashupati — Shiva's bride from the vital plane.

Disciple: Abanindranath very early began his work in the Kangra style. I mean his Krishna Lila paintings.

Sri Aurobindo: All arts in general and poetry and painting in particular belong to the vital plane.

Disciple: Does not poetry — like that of Tagore — come from the mental plane?

Sri Aurobindo: No. It does not come from the mental plane; at best it is from the vital mind, or vital-mental, that it comes.

31 DECEMBER 1938

A few paintings of Picasso were shown to Sri Aurobindo. These were four or five only: A man and a woman; a human figure with a birdlike face and a tuft of hair; and a figure with three eyes, etc.

Sri Aurobindo: There is some power of expression in the picture of the man and woman. The other looks like a Brahmin Pandit with a Tiki [*tuft of hair*] on the head. The face indicates the animal origin and its traces in him. One eye seems Prajna Chakra and the other some other centre.

When these artists *want* to convey something then arises the real difficulty for the viewer. How on earth is one to make out what the artist means, even if he means to convey something? It is all right if you don't want to convey anything but merely express yourself and leave people to feel about it as they like. In that case one gets an impression and even though one can't put it in terms of the mind you can feel the thing, as with the two figures. But if you express

something and say like the Surrealist poets, "Why should a work of art mean anything?" or "Why do you want to understand?" then it becomes difficult to accept it. Take the other picture of the Brahmin Pandit, as I call it. It would have been all right without the eyes. But the eyes, or what seem to be the eyes, at once challenge the mind to think what it means!

(*Turning to a disciple*) Did you see the futuristic painting representing a man in different positions? The artist wanted to convey the idea of movement! It is most absurd. Each art has its own conditions and limitations and you have to work under those conditions and limitations.

Disciple: Elie Faure, the famous art critic, has an idea that France sacrificed her architectural continuity of five hundred years for securing the first place in painting in Europe.

Sri Aurobindo: It is true that France leads in art. What she initiates others follow. But architecture has stopped everywhere.

Disciple: Elie Faure says that the machine also is a piece of architecture.

Sri Aurobindo: How?

Disciple: Because it is made of parts and it fulfils certain functions.

Sri Aurobindo: Then, you are also a piece of architecture: everything in you is made of parts. The motor-car also is architecture!

Disciple: X finds these paintings very remarkable.

Sri Aurobindo: Does he understand anything about them?

Disciple: The more ununderstandable the more remarkble they are, I think.

11 JANUARY 1939

A book on Modern German Art (Pelican Series) was shown to Sri Aurobindo — particularly the illustrations.

Sri Aurobindo: As for the "Parents" it does not do much credit to the artist. I do not understand why he should draw the portraits of two old ugly people unless he wants to do it from a sense of filial duty.

Disciple: Perhaps he wanted to indicate his origin.

Sri Aurobindo: You mean that his parents' portrait explains his art? (*Laughter*)

(*There was an illustration captioned "Watched Girl"*.)

Sri Aurobindo: The picture shows the effect of being watched! And that other illustration, the "Gold Fish", is good as decoration but as painting, no!

Disciple: It looked at first sight to me a curtain or an embroidered piece of cloth for a door or a window curtain.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, it is very good as a decorative design. In pictures like "Early Hours" you find the idea but it could be less violent and less ugly in execution.

(*After some time*) One can't blame Hitler for suppressing these paintings. Germany has lost much. It is surprising how this ugliness is spreading everywhere. Is the art of Bengal also like this?

Disciple: Perhaps the art in Bengal is not so bad as the poetry — except that of Tagore.

Sri Aurobindo: Bad in what way?

Disciple: They are trying to be Eliotian (imitators of T. S. Eliot). Good poetry is not being read. X's book came out and was very well reviewed and yet the book is not selling.

Sri Aurobindo: So they don't read poetry in India as they don't

in England. Nowadays, at least for the last 20 years and more, the field has been captured by fiction — novels, short stories, etc.

Disciple: Is it possible to write spiritual stories, I mean stories with a spiritual content?

Sri Aurobindo: Many occult stories have been written but I do not know of any spiritual stories. They say Marie Corelli used to have that background in her stories though she is not comparable to Lytton in literary merit. She was very popular but nobody reads her stories now. There was one Victoria Cross who used to write erotic novels and she thought there were only two figures in literature: Victoria Cross and Shakespeare! (*Laughter*)

Disciple: Is it possible to write a spiritual story? We know it is possible to write a story with a deep religious background like *Les Misérables*.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, religious but not spiritual.

Disciple: Our friend X has taken up an episode that occurred here, and tried to bring out the spiritual struggle of the individual and contrasted it with the standpoint of the worldly people, i.e., the parents standpoint.

Disciple: Some people here think that he has not done justice to the case of the worldly people. He has made it weak.

Sri Aurobindo: Do you find it a very strong standpoint? It is simply egoistic insistence; you may call it strong insistence if you like, but it is hardly a strong point of view. I can understand the standpoint of someone who does not believe in spirituality and insists on moral and social values; he has no belief in anything else. There can be a stand, and a strong stand, from the artists point of view in that. For instance, in the *Bride of Lammermoor* Scott has tried to bring out a mother's point of view. The daughter falls in love with some young man but the mother does not approve of the match and she is married off to someone else. Here you see the mother does not care for the daughter's happiness but is concerned

with family honour and is trying to secure connection with a high family. This point of view rendered in character has made the book interesting.

♑

24 JANUARY 1939

Disciple: I had occasion to write to O. C. Gangooly who advised me not to undertake any publication on art in India as it is bound to be a loss. One runs into debt. Art is a forbidden fruit. People don't understand it.

Sri Aurobindo: Perhaps people look at art with the same view as X looks at philosophy.

Disciple: Elie Faure says that the Greek arts —- sculpture and painting — are the expression of passions and have no mystery about them.

Sri Aurobindo: What is he talking about? He seems to have a queer mind. Where is the expression of passions in Greek sculpture? On the contrary it is precisely their restraint that is very evident everywhere in this art. The Greeks are well-known for restraint and control. Compared to other peoples' art it is almost cold. It is its remarkable beauty that saves it from coldness. This applies to the period from Phidias to Praxiteles. Only when you come to Laocoön that you find the expression of strong feeling or passion.

Disciple: Perhaps because of the satyrs he says so.

Sri Aurobindo: That is quite another matter, they are symbolic.

Disciple: He also argues, rather queerly, that the poisoning of Socrates, the banishment of Themistocles and the killing of other great men were expressions of unrestrained passion. Greek life was far from settled at that time.

Sri Aurobindo: What has that got to do with the arts?

Disciple: He means to say that the Greek mind that found expression in the arts was such a mind.

Sri Aurobindo: On the contrary, it is a sign of their control, because they checked their leaders from committing excesses. When two leaders became powerful in combination they ostracised one.

♈

12 MAY 1940

Roger Fry's idea about the formal elements in the art of painting was conveyed to Sri Aurobindo.

Disciple: These new movements in the plastic arts correspond to similar movements in the literary arts, especially in poetry. In all these arts the modernists are trying to reduce everything to manipulation of technique. Roger Fry takes the illustrations of the Impressionist Art which he tries to appreciate on the basis of these formal elements and yet he admits that he found it lacking in structure and design.

Sri Aurobindo: But I thought the Impressionists were trying to convey the impression by mass of colour and did not require any design.

Disciple: He seems to have found that Impressionist paintings had no body and so he went to classical art for design and structure. He found them there. But even there he tries to separate what he calls the pure aesthetic feeling from the other overtones of painting.

He takes as an illustration the "Transfiguration" of Michelangelo. He argues that aesthetically it is not necessary for one to know Christian mythology in order to enjoy the picture. These are overtones and have nothing to do with the pure aesthetic

feeling of the picture. The disposition of the mass, the composition, the design, the colour-scheme — these alone contribute to the pure aesthetic value of the picture.

Sri Aurobindo: Does he mean to say that Michelangelo painted it keeping in view the masses and the colour scheme? I thought aesthetics had something to do with beauty, and beauty is not only formal. It is also beauty of the emotion, in fact, beauty of the whole thing taken together.

Disciple: These modern critics have taken some of the formal elements of beauty and have tried to reduce all art to them. Form is certainly an element of beauty, but there are other things also. Roger Fry pays a great compliment to Tolstoy for pointing out that art is not in the object and the only purpose of art is communication. Art mainly conveys emotion from the artist to others.

Sri Aurobindo: The first part is acceptable: for example, beauty may not be in the object but it is the artists vision that sees beauty in it and conveys it through art.

Disciple: Roger Fry does not admit Tolstoy's contention that it is the moral implications of the emotion aroused by the work of art that are important.

Sri Aurobindo: That, of course, is not true.

Disciple: The one good result of modern artistic movements has been that representative art and imitation of Nature are no longer considered the highest art. Now they admit that the artist can take what he likes from Nature for his purpose and convey through his creation whatever he has to say.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. That is how you find some of them representing the human form with a few lines and very imperfectly putting force into it or emotion.

Disciple: He also speaks about the primitives. He says that their painting tries to convey their idea of Man. To them man as they saw

him was not interesting or important, but the idea of Man in their mind was important. In the primitive man's idea the head and the legs and the arms had importance but the torso had no importance.

Sri Aurobindo: I don't think the primitive men had any 'ideas'.

Disciple: Roger Fry refers to the cave paintings in the Pyrenées mountains which are supposed to be ten thousand years old and the bushman's paintings in Africa. He speaks of them as having an idea of the form and also the ability to convey it.

Sri Aurobindo: What they had was not an 'idea' but some perception, or rather some first essential perception of the object and it is that which they tried to convey. You can call it basic perception. Because the modernists believe that there is an idea behind the primitives they call Indian art conceptional. They think that somebody wanted to convey the 'idea of peace' and so he invented the figure of Buddha! But it is not an idea at all, it is the experience that is meant to be conveyed. Vision and experience are the creative elements of Indian art.

What modernist art is trying to do — at least what it began with — is to convey the vital sensation of the object, very often it happens to be the lower vital sensation. But it is the first effort to get behind the physical form.

Disciple: Yes, it was Cézanne who began the modernist movement. It was fortunate that he had not to depend on his art for his maintenance. He had no training in art and yet he was never easily satisfied with his work. His friend Vollard gave him about 150 sittings at the end of which Cézanne said he was dissatisfied with the shirt-collar! In his still-life study of the "Apples" he wanted to convey the very ripeness and warmth of the fruit.

Sri Aurobindo: But, as the Mother says, much of modernist art is erotic folly.

Disciple: Roger Fry argues that as Impressionism was lacking in elements of structure and design Cubism followed almost as a

natural corrective.

Sri Aurobindo: So he thinks that Cubism supplies the element of design in Nature, doesn't he?

Disciple: He himself questions whether a picture is meant to convey merely abstract elements. In fact he asks if it is possible to have a song without meaningful words and without being set to music.

Sri Aurobindo: Evidently not, unless you repeat the letters of the alphabet and call it a song.

14 JANUARY 1941

Sri Aurobindo saw a volume containing Cézanne's paintings and one of the painters of the 20th century representing the most modern trend of the artistic movement in Europe. He found Cézanne "remarkable" in his portraits; all of them were "fine" and "showed power".

In the evening Sri Aurobindo said he liked Matisse also. But he found "three things in general about modern art: Ugliness; vulgarity or coarseness; absurdity".

Sri Aurobindo: In their nude studies it is a very low sexuality which they bring out. They call it 'Life'! One can hardly agree. Even in the ugliest corner of life there is something fine, and even beautiful, that saves it. This art explains why France and Europe have gone down.

When these artists go further in the application of their theories then they become absurd.

And what they mean by 'inner' truth of the object is most often the subconscient or lower vital. There is no objection to suppressing

the non-essentials of a form in a work of art. In fact all great artists do it. But the work that you produce must have aesthetic appeal.

ON POETRY

22 MAY 1925

The talk turned to the subject of Indians writing English poetry. Sri Aurobindo remarked that when he was conducting the *Arya* he received heaps of poems.

Sri Aurobindo asked about Hindi literature, inquiring whether it carried the modern spirit in its works.

Disciple: It contains the element of nationalism, that is the new strain; as for the rest there is not much that can be called modern. The form at present is mainly lyrical.

Sri Aurobindo: But the lyric is quite old in Hindi.

Disciple: What about X's English poetry?

Sri Aurobindo: Has he written anything new recently except his inexhaustible dramas that are no dramas?

Disciple: Y tells me that X has even begun to write in Hindi.

Sri Aurobindo: His poetry nowadays is not what it was before. He gets an idea and then he goes on weaving image after image. There is more language than substance. Besides, he has not the self-control to put in only what is necessary. His first collection was very good. He has language and he knows the technique; but it is high time he condensed his expression instead of diffusing it as he is doing.

♍

12 OCTOBER 1926

Disciple: What name can be given to your philosophy —

viśiṣṭādwaita, *kevalādwaita*, or *śuddhādwaita*?

Sri Aurobindo: Or, *dwaitawāda* of Madhvacharya or *dwaitādwaita* of Nimbarka? Unfortunately all philosophy is mental, i.e., intellectual, while the Supramental is not mental. Therefore, it is not possible to express it completely — because the mind can't. Even when Supermind takes up the task, it only gives indications, gives to the mind some side of itself, some aspect.

Disciple: But you have written philosophy in the *Arya*.

Sri Aurobindo: *Arya* was written because of Richard. After starting it he went away and left me alone to fill 64 pages per month. *The Life Divine* is not philosophy but fact. It contains what I have realised and seen. I think many people would object to calling it philosophy. Of course, there are elements of all the systems in the *Arya.* But Supermind would remain even if the whole of the *Arya* were rubbed out or had never been written. Supermind is not to be philosophised about, it is to be lived.

Disciple: When one lives in the Supermind then there will be perfect expression of it, I believe.

Sri Aurobindo: Not necessarily. I have been telling you it can't be fully expressed. It can be experienced and lived. Do you think living it is inferior to expressing it?

Disciple: Can one express it in art?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. In music, for instance, something of it can be expressed but then to the ordinary mind it might convey nothing. To the man who is ready, or who has some glimpses of it, it may convey much more than to another. That is not because of the thing expressed but because the man is able to go from what is expressed to what is behind the expression.

Disciple: Can poetry be the medium of its expression?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, it can also be. Art and poetry can be the media though they are not adequate. But one who attains the

Supermind does not sit down to write philosophy about it. That is just like using poetry to teach grammar, so as to take all poetry out of it. Even when Supermind finds expression it would carry its meaning only to the man who knows; as the Veda puts it, "Words of the Seer which reveal their mystery only to the Seer." One can't express the whole Supramental Truth but something of it can come through.

Disciple: The other day you spoke about the psychic element in poetry. Is it that which constitutes the highest expression of Truth in poetry?

Sri Aurobindo: There are different types of poetry. That is to say, poetry there may be and yet the psychic element in it may not be strong.

Disciple: What do you think of Vedic poetry?

Sri Aurobindo: It is poetry on the plane of intuitional vision. There are rhythm, force and other elements of poetry in it, but the psychic element is not so prominent. It is from a plane much higher than the mental. It moves by vision on the plane of intuition, though there are passages in which you may find the psychic element. It is a wide and calm plane, — it also moves you but not in the same way as the poetry which contains the psychic feeling. It has got its own depth — but psychic poetry differs from it in its depth and feeling.

Disciple: Is it true that psychic poetry would be more personal?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, one can say so. It moves you differently. Vedic poetry is more impersonal. The centre of vision in psychic poetry is the centre between the eyebrows, in Vedic poetry it is from above the mind. Take, for instance, the hymn:

> Condition after condition is born,
> Covering after covering becomes conscious,
> In the lap of the Mother he entirely sees.

Here you find the whole process of opening up the consciousness to the Truth, and the descent of the Light into the being, but it is different from psychic poetry.

Disciple: In Vedic poetry the psychic feeling comes to the front in hymns expressing aspiration for Agni or for Surya.

Disciple: Can you give an instance of psychic poetry? Is there a psychic element in Vidyapati?

Sri Aurobindo: I think there is some, though it is rare even in Chandidas. As for psychic poetry, take Shelley's lines:

> The desire of the moth for the star,
> Of the night for the morrow,
> The devotion to something afar
> From the sphere of our sorrow.

There the feeling and the expression are both psychic.

Disciple: We find true poetry in the Ishopanishad. Where does it come from?

Sri Aurobindo: It is from the plane of inspiration. It is inspiration of knowledge. The Upanishads are all very high poetry.

Disciple: Then psychic poetry is not the highest poetry?

Sri Aurobindo: Well what do you mean by the highest poetry? Two things are essential for high poetry: vision and beauty. And of course, the power of expression must be there.

Disciple: We recently heard the song *Jaya jaya Gokula bāla.*

Sri Aurobindo: That is devotional poetry, not psychic.

Disciple: *Ahā! Ki mōjā, ki mōjā* is not poetry. (*Laughter*)

Sri Aurobindo: I mentioned vision and beauty as two necessary elements but they do not belong to one plane only, they may belong to various planes.

There must be for great poetry power of beauty, power of vision, power of expression — it may be on any plane. For example, it may

be on the plane of vital aesthesis, or any other plane. All poetry need not be psychic.

Disciple: Do you find the psychic element in Kalidasa's poetry?

Sri Aurobindo: Psychic? I don't think there is much psychic element in his poetry. Vital and aesthetic if you like, — that he has in an extraordinary degree and you find even a certain dignity of thought.

♏

12 DECEMBER 1938

A few of Tagore's last poems were read, which were supposed to bear the burden of experience.

Disciple: Is there anything here?

Sri Aurobindo: Nothing much, except that he speaks of some light in the first poem.

Disciple: In the rest he speaks of losing the body-consciousness and the world-memory getting fainter and fainter.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, that means death.

Disciple: Doesn't it mean that he is getting into another world?

Sri Aurobindo: Well, if it is so, why does he not speak about it? The poem is hazy. The Vaishnava poets state their experiences clearly in their poems.

Disciple: D told me that Tagore in the agony of pain tried to concentrate hard and he could mentally separate himself from the pain and get relief. What experience is that?

Sri Aurobindo: That is a spiritual experience.

Disciple: In his autobiography he speaks of an experience: One day on the terrace of the Jorasanko House he felt a sudden outburst

of joy and the whole of Nature seemed to him bathed in Ananda. The poem "Nirjharer Swapna Bhanga" is the outcome of that experience.

Sri Aurobindo: That is also a spiritual experience. What does he say in that poem?

Disciple: He speaks of a fountain breaking all the barriers and rushing towards the sea in Ananda.

Sri Aurobindo: But why did he adopt that symbol? Did the experience come in that symbolic form?

Disciple: It does not seem so.

Sri Aurobindo: The experience should have been put as he felt it. Nobody reading the poem would realise that it was written from some experience. He tends to become decorative and the danger of decoration is that the main thing gets suppressed by it.

Take the line from the Rig Veda which I have quoted in *The Future Poetry*: "Raising the living and bringing out the dead." When one reads it, it becomes clear at once that it is written from experience. *Usha*, the goddess of Dawn, raises higher and higher whatever is manifested, and brings out all that had remained latent into manifestation. Of course, one has to become familiar with the symbol in order to grasp the truth.

Disciple: But mystic poetry is bound to be a little hazy and vague. Tagore has also written simple and clear poems in his *Gitanjali*, e.g. *āmār māthā noto kare dāo.* Perhaps one can write that sort of poem mentally also.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, one need not have any experience to write that.

Disciple: You once spoke of mystic poetry as 'moonlight' and of spiritual poetry as 'sunlight'.

Sri Aurobindo: No, I meant occult poetry. There are two kinds of mystic poetry: occult-mystic and spiritual-mystic. That poem of

mine "Trance", about the moon and the star, or "The Bird of Fire", is occult-mystic. In "Nirvana", for instance, I have put exactly what Nirvana is. One is at liberty to use any symbol or image but what one says must be very clear through these symbols or images. For example,

> Condition after condition is born,
> Covering after covering becomes conscious,
> In the lap of the Mother he sees. (*Rig Veda* V. 19.1)

Here images are used but it is very clear to anyone knowing the symbol what is meant and it is the result of genuine experience. Take another instance:

> "The seers climb Indra like a ladder."

And along with the ascent

> "much that remains to be done becomes clear."
>
> (*Rig Veda* I. 10. 1-2)

It is an extraordinary passage expressing perfectly a spiritual experience. Indra is the Divine Mind and as one ascends higher and higher in it or on it, all that has to be done becomes clearly visible. One who has that experience can at once see how perfectly true it is, and that it must have been written from experience and not from imagination.[13]

---

[13] Example:

abhyavasthāḥ pra jāyante

pra vavrer vavriś ciketa

upasthe mātur vi caṣṭe. (Rig Veda, V.19.1)

"State is born upon state;
covering after covering becomes conscious of knowledge;
in the lap of the Mother the soul sees."

brahmāṇas tvā śatakrata

ud vaṁśam iva yemire.

Disciple: Cannot one write about spiritual truths sometimes, even without having any experience or being conscious of them?

Sri Aurobindo: Why not? The inner being can have the vision and can express it.

Disciple: Can one who is not a mystic himself write mystic poems?

Sri Aurobindo: One can if one has a tradition inspiring him or a mystic part in his make-up.

ൠ

13 DECEMBER 1938

Disciple: They say the Mantras were heard by the Rishis. Is it the inner hearing?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, it is the inner hearing. Sometimes one hears a line, a passage, a whole poem, or sometimes they come down. The best poetry is always written in that way.

Disciple: Yes. I remember that line

> A fathomless beauty in a sphere of pain,
> coming to me as if someone had whispered it into my ear.

Sri Aurobindo: Quite. It is the inner being but sometimes one

---

yat sānoḥ sānum āruhad

bhūri aspaṣṭa kartvam. (Rig Veda, 1.10.1-2)

"The priests of the word climb thee like a ladder,
O hundred-powered.
As one ascends from peak to peak,
there is made clear the much that has still to be done."

(Both quoted in "The Advent and Progress of the Spiritual Age", Chapter 24, *The Human Cycle*, SABCL, Vol. 15, p. 253. See also *The Future Poetry*, CWSA Vol. 26, p. 222.")

may be deceived. Inspiration from the lower planes also can come in such an automatic way.

Disciple: Oh yes. I have been deceived many times like that. Lines which came at once and automatically and which I thought high-class turned out to be ordinary by your remarks.

Sri Aurobindo: One writes wonderful poems in dream, — surrealistic poems — but when they are written on paper they seem worthless. In Shakespeare in whom poetry always flowed, I suppose, the three lines in *Henry IV* invoking sleep,

> Wilt thou upon the high and giddy mast
> Seal up the ship-boy's eyes and rock his brains
> In the cradle of the rude imperious surge?

leap out strikingly from the rest. There is no doubt at all that these lines have simply descended from above without any interruption. Or, his lyric beginning "Take, O take those lips away" — the whole of it has come down from above.

3 JANUARY 1939

Disciple: A man called Ferrers passed through Calcutta when the Alipore Bomb Trial was going on. Was he known to you in England?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, he was my classmate at Cambridge, but he could not see me in the court when the trial was going on. All the accused were put into a cage lest they should jump out and murder the judge! Ferrers was a barrister practising at Singapore. He saw me in the court-cage and was very much concerned and did not know how to get me out.

It was he who gave me the clue to the hexameter verse in English. He read out a line from Homer which he thought was the best line and that gave me the swing of the metre. There is really no

successful hexameter in English. Matthew Arnold and his friends have attempted it but they have failed.

Disciple: I thought Yeats has written it.

Sri Aurobindo: Where? I did not know. I think you mean the alexandrine.

Disciple: Perhaps it is that.

Sri Aurobindo: Plenty of people have written it. But this is dactylic hexameter, — the metre in which the epics of Homer and Virgil are written. It has a very fine movement and is very suitable for the epic. I have tried it and X and Y have seen and considered it a success. I remember just a few lines:

> Old and alone he arrived, insignificant, feeblest of mortals,
> Carrying Fate in his helpless hands and the doom of an empire.
>
> (*Ilion*)

Disciple: When did you begin to write poetry?

Sri Aurobindo: When we three brothers were staying at Manchester. I began to write for the Fox family magazine. I was very young. It was an awful imitation of somebody I don't remember. Then I went to London where I began to write poetry. Some of the poems then written are published in *Songs to Myrtilla.*

Disciple: Did you learn metre at school?

Sri Aurobindo: They don't teach metre at school. I began to read and then write poetry by following the sound. I am not a prosodist like X.

Disciple: Had Manmohan already become a poet while in England?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, he, Laurence Binyon, Stephen Phillips were all poets. But he did not come to very much, though he brought out a book — *Primavera* — in conjunction with others like Binyon and it

was well spoken of. But I dare say my brother stimulated me to write poetry.

Disciple: Was not Oscar Wilde his friend?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, he was. Manmohan used to visit him very often in the evenings and he used to describe Manmohan in his Wildish way: "A young Indian panther in evening brown!"

Wilde was as brilliant in conversation as he was in writing. Once some of his friends came to see him and asked him how he had passed the morning. He described at length his visit to the zoo and gave a graphic description of what he had seen, the animals and other things. Then at the end Mrs. Wilde put in in a small voice: "But how could you say that, Oscar, when you have been with me all the morning?" He replied: "Darling, one must be imaginative sometimes."

There is another story of Wilde. Once a proof was sent to him for correction. He wrote to the press, "I have put in a comma." Then the second proof came and he sent it back with the remark, "I have taken out the comma."

9 JANUARY 1939

Disciple: Is it true that the epic now, after Milton, will tend to be more subjective?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, it is so. The idea that an epic requires a story has been there for long, but the story as a subject for an epic seems to be exhausted. It will have to be more subjective and the element of interpretation will have to be admitted.

Disciple: There is an idea that the form of the epic may be a combination of epic and drama, or may be a series of odes in combination like the one written by Meredith.

Sri Aurobindo: There has been an effort by Victor Hugo. His *La Légende des siècles* is epic in tone, in thought and movement. And yet it is not given its right place by the critics. It does not deal with a story but with episodes. That is the only epic in the French language.

Disciple: Some maintain that as there is no story in Dante's *Divine Comedy* it is not an epic.

Sri Aurobindo: It *is* an epic. *Paradise Lost* has very little story and very few incidents, yet it is an epic. At present men demand something more than a great story from an epic.

Disciple: *Hyperion* of Keats, — is it an epic?

Sri Aurobindo: The first draft of it would have been an epic — if he could have kept to the height and finished the poem. But in the second draft there is already a drop — a decline from the epic height.

Disciple: There have been Indian writers of English poetry. What do you think of them?

Sri Aurobindo: They do write poetry in English and it may even be successful, but it is not the real man who is speaking. Very few can do it in another language. Sarojini Naidu has a small range but has the capacity to express herself.

Disciple: The general impression is that poetry is not in vogue in England, or perhaps anywhere else.

Sri Aurobindo: It is true; poetry is not read in England today. Somebody sent my poems to a publisher who gave them to his reader. He said: "They are remarkable poems and have a new element in them. But I don't advise their publication. If the writer has written anything in prose it is better to publish it first and then the poems may go."

Disciple: Harin's poems were sent to Masefield but got only lukewarm praise from him. He said they were "interesting".

Sri Aurobindo: Why were they sent to Masefield?

Disciple: Perhaps, because he was the Poet Laureate.

Sri Aurobindo: Generally Poet Laureates are uninteresting; very few are like Wordsworth and Tennyson. Masefields poems are Georgian rhetoric.

Disciple: Do you remember *Volsung Saga* by William Morris?

Sri Aurobindo: It is a very good poem; it is an exercise in epic. I remember his *Earthly Paradise* which is exceedingly fine. There is a tendency to run down Morris, because he derived his inspiration from the Middle Ages as the Victorian age did not give him any subject. Shelley and Keats both tried to bring in the epic with the subjective element, but they failed because they tried to put it in the old forms.

Disciple: Toru Dutt has written poetry in English and was well-spoken of for some time.

Sri Aurobindo: She has written poetry, — not as an Indian writing in English but like an Englishwoman. But in England no one considers her a great poet. The only vigorous poetry she wrote was about the German invasion of France. That is because of her great sympathy for France. I remember her phrase for France: "The head of the human column" and "Atilla's own exultant hordes" for the Germans.

After reading some of the modernist poetry I am not surprised that poetry is not read today.

6 JANUARY 1940

A letter to one of the poet-disciples was received from Tagore in which he had tried to make the following points:

1. Those who try to express high spiritual truths in poetry tended to create something new — a novelty — and, therefore, there was *ceṣṭā*, effort, in their writings.

2. A true literary architect would build rather on the common earth of common humanity —*jana sādhāraṇa* — and not insist on building on Kanchan Jangha — Himalayan heights.

3. He suggested that the *cira purātana dhārā* — the age-old way — in literature should be the guide.

Sri Aurobindo: I believe those who have experience or vision of spiritual truth, when they do express themselves in poetry, try to reproduce it as they see it and make no effort — *ceṣṭā* — to make themselves understood. So the work is not a result of effort. And it is just this that makes their poetry difficult for others.

And as to his second point about building on common earth, it may be that the poet may not build for all, he may have a private chapel. The artist creates moved by an inner urge, not according to any ulterior motive, or consideration for the mass.

Disciple: Tagore also says that even if the artist sees a heavenly vision he will build his heaven on earth.

Sri Aurobindo: He may, but it is not necessarily so.

Disciple: About art Kalelkar's contention is that it is a vessel. His idea is that the food is more important than the vessel in which it is served.

Sri Aurobindo: Perhaps that is Tagores idea too. But there can't be art without form. If you have substance only then it is only substance and not art. An artist tries to give body to his vision and you can't separate the soul from the body. These images — vessel and food — can be applied to physical processes, not to any inner process like art-creation.

Disciple: When he speaks of the *cira purātana dhārā* — the age-old way in literature, he forgets that he himself would have said

when he began his new style that he did not care for the *cira purātana* way, as it is *purātana* and that he himself was *nitya nūtana* — ever new and fresh — the same old truth expressing itself through ever new forms.

Sri Aurobindo: Sometimes poets themselves get into a groove and are unable to appreciate anything new.

7 JANUARY 1940

Disciple: Mahatma Gandhi at one of the literary conferences in Gujarat, in 1920, asked the writers: "What have you done for the man who is drawing water from the well?"

Sri Aurobindo: What has he himself done for him? I am afraid he has not done very much.

Most of these people forget that everybody in England does not understand Milton and that the ordinary man has to prepare himself to understand high poetry.

Disciple: Tagore says that even if what you have to give is Amrita it must be eatable by the ordinary man.

Sri Aurobindo: But people also must have capacity to understand and enjoy noble literature.

Disciple: Kalelkar in a recent article has tried to make out that Valmiki wanted to serve *janatā*, humanity, and so he recited the Ramayana from cottage to cottage! I can never understand this idea. I can't imagine Valmiki doing it. When did he find the time to write the Ramayana, if he was reciting it from place to place?

Sri Aurobindo: But where does Kalelkar find his authority for saying so? The Ramayana was not recited to the mass by Valmiki. It was the reciters who popularised it.

Disciple: He refers to some verse in the Ramayana which

describes how the Rishis heard the Ramayana and gave Valmiki a Kaupin (loin cloth), a Kamandalu (water pot), and a Parnakuti (thatched hut).

Sri Aurobindo: Good Lord! But the Rishis are not *jana sādhāraṇa* — ordinary people; they lived apart and had reached a very high spiritual status. Is Kalelkar himself understood by the masses?

Disciple: I believe, formerly, Tagore had not got this idea of *jana sādhāraṇa*.

Sri Aurobindo: No. He had been always speaking of the *viśwa mānava* — the universal man. It is not the same as *jana sādhāraṇa.* In the Vishwa Manava all the best people, as well as the lowest of humanity, are included. Perhaps in the *jana sādhāraṇa* only the lowest remain.

Disciple: It is the proletarian idea of literature coming with the Socialistic and Communistic ideology. Or, perhaps it is the echo of Vivekananda's *daridra nārāyaṇa*— the divine as the poorest.

Sri Aurobindo: I think it is Vivekananda who started the idea.

Disciple: He at least had the idea of *nārāyaṇa* while he served them; but nowadays the unfortunate part is that Narayana is lost sight of, only the *daridra* remain.

Some time back there was an article in Hindi *kasmai devāya haviṣā vidhema*—To which God shall we make our offering? And the writer answered: *janatā janārdanāya* — to the average humanity which is God. Thus *janārdana* is to be equated to *janatā* which is ignorant and imperfect. It almost seems that according to these people God outside *janatā* does not exist!

Sri Aurobindo: Quite so.

Disciple: And they don't try to raise the *janatā* to *janārdanatwa* — divinity. Every time they try to go down to its level. It does not seem possible to serve it by going down to its level.

♑

17 JANUARY 1940

The talk centred on Tagore's letter to Nishikanta concerning poetry.

Sri Aurobindo: Take Francis Thompson's "Hound of Heaven". Everybody does not understand it. Does it follow that Thompson is not a great poet? Or take the Upanishads. They deal with one subject only and have one strain. Can we say, therefore, that it is not great poetry?

Disciple: Tagore does not raise the question of understanding but of variety.

Sri Aurobindo: Homer has written on war and action. Can one say that those who write on many subjects are greater than Homer? Sappho wrote only on one subject. Can we say therefore she is not great? What about Milton and Mirabai?

Disciple: What Tagore wants to say is that to be a perfect poet one must have variety.

Sri Aurobindo: In that case we have to conclude that no poet is perfect. Even Shakespeare has his limitations. Browning has variety — can we, therefore, say that he is greater than Milton?

Disciple: In considering the greatness of a poet, depth and height and variety have to be considered.

Sri Aurobindo: Height and depth — yes. But why compare greatness? Each one writes in his own way.

♑

18 JANUARY 1940 (MORNING)

Disciple: We heard from you that some people consider Blake greater than Shakespeare — is it correct?

Sri Aurobindo: I did not say that. It is Housman who says that Blake has more pure poetry than Shakespeare.

Disciple: What does he mean by that?

Sri Aurobindo: He means that Blake's poetry is not vital or mental, i.e., intellectual, but comes from beyond the Mind and expresses spiritual or mystic experience.

Disciple: Since the two deal with quite different spheres, can the comparison be valid? Or, if Blake really has more pure poetry, then can he be said to be greater than Shakespeare?

Sri Aurobindo: Shakespeare is superior in one way, Blake in another. Shakespeare is greater in that he has a greater poetic power and more creative force, while Blake is more expressive.

Disciple: What is the difference between the two?

Sri Aurobindo: 'Creative' is something which gives a picture of life convincingly, representing the life-situation of the Spirit. 'Expressive' is that which is just the expression of feeling, vision or experience. In "The Hound of Heaven" you get a true creative picture. Blake was often confused and was a failure when he tried to be creative in his prophetic poems.

Disciple: Did you write to X that in life Shakespeare is everywhere and Blake nowhere?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, it is true.

Disciple: But can we compare poets and decide who is greater?

Sri Aurobindo: How can you?

Disciple: But you said, for instance, that Yeats can be considered greater than A.E. because of greater style.

Sri Aurobindo: "More sustained" style.

Disciple: Then, there *is* some standard — say, power of rhythm, expression, subject, form, substance, variety, etc.

Sri Aurobindo: If one has all form and no substance, is he greater than one who has substance and no form? Some say Sophocles is greater than Shakespeare, others say Euripides is greater. There are others, again, who say Euripides is nowhere near Sophocles. How can you say whether Dante is greater or Shakespeare?

Disciple: It is better to ask what is the criterion of great poetry.

Sri Aurobindo: Is there any criterion?

Disciple: Then how to judge?

Sri Aurobindo: One feels these things.

Disciple: But different people feel differently.

Sri Aurobindo: So there cannot be a universal standard. Each one goes by his feeling or opinion or liking.

Disciple: Abercrombie tries to give a general criterion. Only one point I remember just now: he says that if the outlook of the poet is negative and pessimistic, his poetry cannot be 'great' — e.g., Hardy.

Sri Aurobindo: I don't see why. Usually, of course, great poets are not pessimistic, — they have too much life-force in them. But generally every poet is dissatisfied with something or other and has some element of pessimism in him. Sophocles said, "The best thing is not to be born." (*Laughter*)

Disciple: But we want you to give us the criterion or criteria by which one can decide the greatness of poetry. We always compare X and Y and never agree about their greatness.

Sri Aurobindo: Why not be satisfied with what I have said? All I can say is that X has a greater mastery over the medium and greater creative force.

Disciple: What did you say about creative poetry?

Sri Aurobindo: Poetry is creative where it gives a complete picture of life as in "The Hound of Heaven". There you have such a picture of the life of a man pursued by God.

Disciple: Thompson had some experience of what he has written.

Sri Aurobindo: Oh, yes.

Disciple: X is not quite successful in his mystic poems.

Sri Aurobindo: What do you mean by mystic? Occult? Symbolic? There are various kinds of mystic poetry.

♑

18 JANUARY 1940 (EVENING)

Disciple: It is difficult to bring in creative force in mystic symbolic poetry.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, it *is* difficult, but it is possible.

Disciple: Is there creative force in that sonnet of Mallarmé on the swan?

Sri Aurobindo: I have forgotten the poem.

Disciple: That poem in which he speaks of the wings of the swan being stuck to the frozen ice so that it cannot fly.

Sri Aurobindo: There is no creative force in it; it is descriptive and expressive. In lyrical poetry it is generally difficult to give the creative force. In sonnet form it is only in a series of sonnets — as in Meredith's "Modern Love" — that one can put in creative force.

Disciple: That means it can be done only in descriptive and narrative poems.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, in epics, dramas, series of sonnets, as I said.

But modern poets say that long poems are not poetry! Only in short poems you get the essence of pure poetry!

Disciple: Some of the moderns have themselves written long poems. Among Indian poets Tagore would score high as he has great creative force.

Sri Aurobindo: Tagore is essentially a lyrical poet, and has no more creative force in his poetry than in his drama. One of his long poems, *Debatār Grās*, I remember, was very finely descriptive but it did not create anything.

Disciple: Is not X creative? He has traced the growth of consciousness from the ordinary level to the transformation by turning to the Divine.

Sri Aurobindo: It is the description of an ideal. In fact, very few poets are creative.

Disciple: I would like to understand more clearly your idea of creative poetry. Don't you find in Tagore's *Jete Nāhi Diva* a great creative force?

Sri Aurobindo: No.

Disciple: It is — as he said just now about *Debatār Grās* — a very good description.

Sri Aurobindo: The girl there is created out of Tagore's mind. For example, when you read *Hamlet*, you become Hamlet — you feel you are Hamlet. When you read Homer, you see Achilles living and moving and you become Achilles. That is what I mean by creativeness. On the other hand, in Shelley's "Skylark" there is no skylark at all. You do not become a skylark, — through that poem the poet has only expressed his own ideas and feelings. Take his line,

Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.

It is very fine poetry but it is not creative in the sense that it does not make you live in that truth.

Disciple: In poems of Bhakti one can feel devotion.

Sri Aurobindo: It is feeling only. It does not create for you a living and moving world. Feeling is not enough to be creative.

Disciple: Abercrombie says that poetry should express and carry to the reader the poet's experience.

Sri Aurobindo: It depends upon what you mean by experience. An idea may be an experience, a feeling may be an experience.

Disciple: In comparing Shelley and Milton he says that *Prometheus Unbound* is not as great a theme as *Paradise Lost*.

Sri Aurobindo: It is not as great because Shelley does not create anything there. But the theme is equally great.

Disciple: He says that Satan and Christ are living characters created by Milton.

Sri Aurobindo: Satan is the only character he has created. His first four books are full of creative force. But Christ? Well, I object to the claim that he ever created Christ.

Disciple: About Dante, Abercrombie says that he created Beatrice and her memory was always with him.

Sri Aurobindo: What about Dante's political life? I am sure he was not thinking of Beatrice when he was doing politics.

Disciple: Abercrombie says that a true poet passes on his experience to his readers.

Sri Aurobindo: But there are poets who neither experience nor even understand what they have written. They merely transcribe. I myself have done that. One can transmit and transcribe.

♑

19 JANUARY 1940 (MORNING)

Two disciples had a discussion on creative force and one of them did not quite catch the distinction between 'creative force' and 'experience' in poetry. They decided to raise the question today.

Sri Aurobindo caught the idea and so he asked: "Do you want to say something, or ask a question?"

Disciple: X is not clear in his mind about 'creative force' in regard to devotional poems. Why should they not be considered 'creative' if one feels devotion by them?

Sri Aurobindo: Because you identify yourself with the feeling and not with the character or man as in the case of *Hamlet*. It must come out of a part of the poet's personality and the reader identifies himself with the world or personality which the poet has created or the experience which he had. Of course, everything is creative in a general way.

Disciple: Abercrombie says that a great poet transmits his experience to the reader.

Disciple: But one can transmit the creative force without having oneself the experience or without being conscious.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, it can be done. But people who have the creative force usually make it a part of themselves, they have the experience first and then they transcribe it.

Disciple: How to get the correct force?

Sri Aurobindo: Either you have it or you do not have it. Some poets are born with it.

Disciple: Can one acquire it?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. It can be developed. Most people have it within them, but it may not manifest. In Yoga, of course, it is different. Here it depends on the power of opening.

Disciple: X says that your "Bird of Fire" has got creative force. It

is a creative symbolic poem.

Sri Aurobindo (*smiling*)**:** I don't know. It is for X to pronounce.

Disciple: He believes that your "Shiva" also has the same force.

Sri Aurobindo: It is for others to judge. It is not necessary to become Shiva. The point is whether you find the picture created living.

Disciple: I find it living. That is to say, it is not an idea of what Shiva is or stands for that is depicted. I find here a personality, a being.

Sri Aurobindo: That means what is created is living. But why not leave out my poetry? If you want examples, I gave you that of "The Hound of Heaven" and you may add Chesterton's "Lepanto".

Disciple: X says that if there is poetic force, it will be felt. I told him that everybody may not feel the force. "The Hound of Heaven", for instance, wont be appreciated by everybody.

Sri Aurobindo: Not by *jana sādhāraṇa* as you call him. But a poet or a literary man who has taste for poetry will feel the force, unless he has a prejudice.

Disciple: What about *Meghnād Vadha* of Madhusudan? Has it not creativeness?

Sri Aurobindo: A poor creation! What sort of Ravana has he created? It is an outline of an idealised non-rakshasic Rakshasa!

Bengalis in those days were very fond of weeping. I think it was Romesh Dutt who translated "Savitri" from the Mahabharata and portrayed her as weeping, whereas in the Mahabharata there is no trace of it. Even when her heart was being sawed in two not a single tear appeared in her eyes. By making her weep he took away the very strength of which Savitri is built.

Disciple: He wanted to make it realistic perhaps.

Sri Aurobindo: He thought that Vyasa had made a mess of it.

About Madhusudan, I don't say that it is not fine poetry, or that there is no force, or no thought in it. What I say is that it is not creative, it has no vital substance.

Disciple: People say he tried to imitate Milton.

Sri Aurobindo: Milton, Homer and everybody else perhaps!

Disciple: Among our poets here do you find X great?

Sri Aurobindo: I was reading his book and I find it exceedingly fine poetry but in order to be called 'great' that is not enough. In order to equal Tagore he must progress more in 'body'. I don't mean length. What I mean is the quality of massiveness. One can say his whole work has not got sufficient 'body'. I have read his long poems also, but that element is not yet there. Yeats has not written long poems, but if you take his poems piece by piece you will see that he has sufficient body in his work. Tagore has added to the body of the world's literature. If you take it poem by poem, perhaps, X's work may equal Tagore's, but he has not that body which the latter has and which can stand by itself.

Disciple: Is not X's poetry sufficiently characteristic?

Sri Aurobindo: It is; but I mean quite another thing. For instance, if Milton had not written *Paradise Lost* he would have still been a great poet, but he could not have occupied so great a place as he does in English literature. Keats, some people say, would have been as great as Shakespeare, had he lived. At least there was the promise in him, but it was not fulfilled.

Disciple: Some people have demanded of Y to attempt something big, like an epic.

Sri Aurobindo: For the epic you require the power of architectural construction. With most of these poets it is yet the promise and not the fulfilment of their poetic personality.

♑

19 JANUARY 1940 (EVENING)

Sri Aurobindo: You were asking me about an example of a lyrical poem which had the creative force in it. Well, I can give you two examples from Tagore though it is not usual with him to write such lyrics. His *Urvasie* and *Parash Pāthar* have got that creative force — there he has created something, not a character, but some reality of the inner life of man. What I mean is, it is not simply a description. Also Nishikanta in the *Gorur Gāḍī* — bullock cart — has created something. You see there that the 'cart' is a real cart and the man in it is a real man; and yet it is the 'world-cart' and the 'world-man' in it.

Take Shelley's "Skylark" or Keats' "Nightingale". There you find that the skylark and the nightingale are nothing; they are only an occasion. It is the thoughts, the feelings and the images that rise in the poets mind that you get when you read the poem.

ঌ

27 JANUARY 1940 (EVENING)

Disciple: I had a talk with X and he asks: How can Francis Thompson be called a great poet because he has written one poem "The Hound of Heaven" which is great?

Sri Aurobindo: What do you mean by 'great'? At any rate it *is* a great poem and one who has written a great poem is a great poet.

Disciple: Perhaps if you take into account the mass of his work he may not appear great. But in his "Hound of Heaven" he has achieved the summit of poetic art and it sums up his whole experience. In that sense it is great.

Sri Aurobindo: And it is not individual life but universal life. Anybody who goes through spiritual life gets that experience.

The idea of greatness of poetry is difficult to standardise. The French poet Villon, if you take his poems one by one, is equal in greatness to any other great poet, but if you take his work in a mass you can't justify his greatness. Petrarch has written only sonnets and that on one subject, and yet he is considered a great poet and given a place next to Dante. Simonides has not a single surviving complete poem, he is known by fragments and yet he is regarded as second only to Pindar who is called the greatest Greek lyricist. "The Hound of Heaven" is a far greater poem than any of Oscar Wilde's or Chesterton's.

♍

26 SEPTEMBER 1943

Disciple: What is the real root of man's interest in stories and literature? Is it truth? If it is not, what is its purpose?

Sri Aurobindo: Literature exists for its own sake; it has an independent value. Its purpose is governed by the law of Ananda. If you bring in, or make it serve, some other purpose — say, morality or philosophy — then it does not serve its highest purpose.

Disciple: But literature, art, poetry all have to give us truth, have they not?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, in art, poetry and literature there is truth. However it is not the discovery and statement of truth in itself, but of the beauty of truth or truth as beauty.

The law of Ananda governs these activities. Some parts of literature have their own laws: for instance, fiction. Its law is to represent life.

If the writer has spirituality in himself, it is bound to express itself in his poetry or art.

Disciple: Should then literature set before it the task of evolution

towards, or an ascent to, a higher consciousness?

Sri Aurobindo: Literature need not set that task before itself. It will itself be influenced automatically by the process of upward evolution and thus create higher and higher beauty and delight.

♍

28 SEPTEMBER 1943

The talk centred round Lascelles Abercrombie's idea of great poetry. His general thesis is that literature is communication of experience involving three factors:

1. Subjective; 2. objective; 3. medium of communication.

Disciple: Abercrombie says that in poetry the poet wants to transfer his experience without the least modification to others. That is to say, poetry — all literature for that matter — is not merely expression or self-expression; it is chiefly communication.

Sri Aurobindo: When a poet writes poetry he does not think of others who may read it. He should not, because then he would be influenced by their likes and dislikes. He thinks only of himself, as he should.

Disciple: But he writes because he has some experience.

Sri Aurobindo: What do you mean by experience? You mean change in his subjective consciousness due to an outer or an inner impact, don't you? There are cases where the experience is not his own. It is something that descends or takes hold of him, or it may be even an experience imagined.

Disciple: Could an experience which is imagined be equally strong in expression as an actual experience?

Sri Aurobindo: It depends. Experience as one has it is not literature; it is too matter of fact. Generally, it is divested of its local

and personal character by a great writer. Imagination can only give him a mental construction; but inspiration can give a powerful expression. In a great poem you will find it is not merely an expression, but there is an element of creation. You can't define these things rigidly, but you can describe it so as to include the most important things or factors.

ON BEAUTY

12 AUGUST 1926

Disciple: What is it that creates physical beauty?

Sri Aurobindo: There is a certain vital glow which is really not beauty — when it is overpowering and full of personal magnetism it is dangerous.

Disciple: Can heredity account for beauty?

Sri Aurobindo: Not much. Too much of vital glow and charm may be due even to the hostile forces and it may be dangerous.

Disciple: Does beauty belong to the vital world?

Sri Aurobindo: The true vital world is a world full of beauty and grandeur.

Disciple: Is not beauty a part of perfection?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, it is; but beauty and perfection do not always go together in life.

Disciple: Is not beauty psychic in its origin?

Sri Aurobindo: The psychic element gives only a certain charm to the form, not what people ordinarily call beauty. There is a vital and a physical element in beauty and even in these there is an 'inner' beauty, a certain charm, a flame in the object.

Disciple: It is said that Sri Ramakrishna's body had a glow which he used to hide from men by covering his body. Can one say it was inner beauty?

Sri Aurobindo: It may be the light of the Spirit; that is not beauty. There are many people who are not spiritual but are beautiful and some spiritual men are not beautiful.

Disciple: What is meant by saying that the Supreme is the True,

the Good and the Beautiful — *satyam-śivam-sundaram*?

Sri Aurobindo: That is a different thing. The True can be the mental form of the Supreme Truth, the Good has a relation to morality. Whereas Beauty is different with different men, there is no one standard of beauty. There are certain things, however, which all people consider beautiful: for instance, the rose.

Disciple: What did Christ look like? Were the Rishis beautiful?

Sri Aurobindo: None can say, because there is no record.

Disciple: On what does the creation of beauty depend?

Sri Aurobindo: True beauty is a creation from the Ananda plane.

Disciple: But some people say there is beauty in everything.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. There is a stage in which everything has its beauty. For a perfect creation of beauty three elements are needed:

1. The fundamental element of beauty which is present in everything.
2. The pervading quality or Guna.
3. The expression or form.

Where these three are in agreement then there is the perfect expression of the Ananda.

Disciple: What is the utility of aesthetic refinement in spiritual development?

Sri Aurobindo: The aesthetic sense is easily purified and it can then open the path of approach to the Supreme through beauty. It is very difficult to purify a rough and gross being.

ൟ

27 AUGUST 1926

The other day there was a talk about the *arūpa devas* — gods without form — and the *rūpa devas* and their planes. Sri Aurobindo explained that it was merely a mental way of dealing with those things. Beauty is not merely an abstraction of the mind. Of course, the mind can create a sort of division and think of beauty as an abstraction. It seems merely an idea without, as it were, any power behind it. But if you go to the plane above mind you find that all things that are abstractions in the mind are Powers and Realities there. There you find that Beauty is a power of the Supreme.

Disciple: I want to know what connection this power of beauty has with Vaishnavism. Bhakti begins with emotion. Is there a connection between Bhakti and this power of beauty?

Sri Aurobindo: How do you mean? I don't understand your question. Bhakti has not only the sense of beauty in it, there are many other elements besides.

Disciple: There is the emotional element, but where or when does the element of beauty enter — at the beginning or at the end?

Sri Aurobindo: It may be at the beginning or at any other time. There is the emotional element, the element of faith, the element of love, of beauty, of Ananda and so many other things.

Disciple: You said that "Beauty is a power of the Supreme." I want to have some idea of that power on the plane higher than the mental.

Sri Aurobindo: Why on the higher plane only? Do you think that beauty is not a power? Do you believe that it is a mental abstraction?

Disciple: I can understand that it is a power in a certain sense on the mental, vital and physical planes. But what is it on the plane higher than the mind?

Sri Aurobindo: Well, how can I convey an idea of it to you?

Beauty is beauty everywhere and it is a power wherever it may be.

But what is your idea of beauty? What is beauty? Is it an abstraction?

Disciple: No, it is not an abstraction.

Sri Aurobindo: What is it then? When you say "There is beauty in the rose," is it something apart from the rose itself? What do you mean by it?

Disciple: I mean it is a quality.

Sri Aurobindo: 'Quality' is an abstract idea.

Disciple: I would say that it is not an idea but something connected with the life of the flower, something of the life-force in it.

Disciple: Whenever beauty of form is concerned, it is said that certain relations are required to be fulfilled, proportion, harmony, etc. Otherwise the form is not beautiful.

Sri Aurobindo: Well, that is not the whole of beauty. Neither is it the most essential element. You can say "That is how beauty expresses itself." But it is not the essence of beauty — lines, proportions, etc. are there only its supports, especially in the beauty of forms, not so much in other kinds of beauty. There is, for instance, beauty of emotion, of thought, of force, of Ananda, etc. By observing the rules about line, proportion, rhythm, harmony, etc., a man does not become an artist. Every time a new creator comes into the field of art he brings something which to others appears perhaps out of proportion. Then a time comes when people begin to see and discover new proportions and a new harmony. Even in music the same thing happens. For instance, when Wagner gave his music it sounded very unusual and, to some, discordant. But at last they found harmony and rhythm and everything else.

Similarly poetry is not some arrangement of words or ideas, it is a power which goes forth from the being of the poet.

In other religions there is a certain insistence on moral virtues, therefore they did not put the same emphasis on beauty. But in India God is the All-beautiful.

Disciple: What is the relation of beauty and devotion?

Sri Aurobindo: In the path of devotion, the Bhakti Marga in India, God is regarded as the All-beautiful. In the case of other paths it is not so.

Disciple: There is an idea that for art limitation is necessary. There can be no art if there is no restraint and every great artist imposes his own limitations.

Sri Aurobindo: Well, it is not always true. Take the lines and forms used by art. You can say that they serve to limit the expression and there are artists who produce works of art under that kind of restraint. But it is not always so. Take, for instance, Shakespeare. At first the idea was that in his work there is no measure and harmony. It was considered bizarre. Then they found that it was a work of great art. In a poet like Shakespeare the movement is not towards limitation but rather expression — a throwing himself out to cover everything.

And a work of art is not great unless the artist is able to express the infinite through the limitations, — unless the lines and forms are not overpassed, so to say. There must be beauty of line and form but that is only the primary basis, — the earth on which you stand, — but it must go beyond and express something from within. That is what we mean when we say that a particular work of art is 'cold', though you can see that the beauty of line and form — the technique — is perfect. The work may not be sufficiently 'inspired'. Take Greek art: it was their aim to put as much of inner beauty as they could in a limited form and line which had set standards. In India we had quite another standard.

Disciple: What is it in beauty that gives us delight?

Sri Aurobindo: Beauty is the Divine himself in his Ananda

power seeking to express himself in perfect form. That is, perhaps, the only definition that could be given. Since you are particular about it one can say that there are several elements of beauty: one is the power of Ananda that seeks expression, the other is the form — or you can say, the manner in which it expresses itself.

Disciple: I suppose it is also necessary that the physical instrument should be prepared so that it can express perfect beauty.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, the training of the physical instrument is absolutely essential because without it the work of art cannot take the perfect body.

Disciple: If we look at a man like Tagore, do you think that in a case like his also the physical instruments have to be trained, or can one say that the force which is working in such people creates its own instruments?

Sri Aurobindo: There are people who are born with their physical instrument ready. Even then a lot of training is necessary. Even if the force created its own instrument the work would be uneven — very good at times but very bad at other times.

Disciple: Tagore did a lot of work before he became established as a poet.

Sri Aurobindo: Shakespeare studied all the existing dramas before he wrote his own. One cannot play the violin without training.

Disciple: Would not the Higher Power develop even the physical instrument when it comes down?

Sri Aurobindo: It is a great advantage if you can start with a good instrument.

Disciple: But how is it that when a man appreciates beauty he is not conscious of it as an expression of God?

Sri Aurobindo: There are so many things of which man is not conscious. I am not speaking of what man feels, or sees or is

conscious of. I am speaking of what is behind.

Disciple: If a poet does not know the language he cannot be a great poet.

Sri Aurobindo: Nor can he invent rhythms unless he knows prosody. In art, as in everything else, training is necessary; one can develop the sense of beauty consciously.

Disciple: Have not the musicians got the sense of beauty inborn in them?

Sri Aurobindo: Not all. And even if it is there, much has to be done before it expresses itself perfectly. So many elements have to be brought together and harmonised before there can be the perfect expression.

Disciple: Does not, then, the expression become forced?

Sri Aurobindo: Do you mean to say that when a poet writes his lines and then revises them and finds that certain things ought to be changed, he is becoming artificial, or that his poetry becomes forced? Not at all.

Disciple: Does the artist get his form from the vital only?

Sri Aurobindo: No. But these arts are such that they require their stand in the vital. There may be other elements in them but the vital is indispensable. In fact, the highest poetry cannot come except through the vital. One may take the elements from the mind or emotion or other parts according to necessity.

Disciple: How far is mind a factor in the process?

Sri Aurobindo: If you mean the intellectual mind it has a very small part — though it, too, has a part. The whole process is very complicated. The first impulse is given by the vital and then there is communication with the higher mind — the intuitive faculty. Then something from there comes down to the heart and the artist again takes it up into the mind, and gives expression to it.

Disciple: That is to say, something from above comes down

through intuition?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, some power from above. I use the word 'intuition' in the general sense for all the faculties that act; more properly it is 'inspiration'.

Disciple: In what way does the mind enter as a factor in the creation of poetry?

Sri Aurobindo: In the very highest poetry, the mind is silent; in other kinds, the mind is active but it is not the intellectual mind.

♑

24 JANUARY 1939

After a period of discussion, Sri Aurobindo went into silence for a while. When he came out he began on his own:

Sri Aurobindo: I was thinking how some races have the sense of beauty in their very bones. Judging from what is left to us, it seems our people once had a keen sense of beauty. For example, take pottery, or Indian wood-carving which, I am afraid, is dying out now. Greece and ancient Italy had the perception of beauty. The Japanese are a remarkable people — even the poorest have got the aesthetic sense. If they produce ugly things, it is only for export to other countries. I am afraid the Japanese are losing that sense now because of the general vulgarisation. In Germany Hitler must have crushed all fine things out of existence — music, philosophy, etc. How can anything develop where there is no freedom? I hope Mussolini has kept some sense of art.

Disciple: He is very proud of Italians as a nation of artists! A friend of mine visited Italy and found that the Italians still have a sense of beauty and art.

Sri Aurobindo: Of music also. Art and music are their passion.

The Mother had a remarkable experience. She was staying in North Italy for some time and was once playing on the organ all alone in a church. After she had finished, there was a big applause. She found that a crowd had gathered and was ecstatic in appreciation.

Disciple: Indian music, especially in the South, has been preserved in the temples.

Nishtha is all praise for many Indian things. She finds great beauty in the gait of Indian women. She once told me, "You wont understand it, but I have seen our European women and I can understand it better. Indian women seem to me born dancers; they have such a fine rhythm in their walk."

Sri Aurobindo: She is quite right. I suppose it is due to their having to carry pots on their heads.

Disciple: She also praises the coloured saris of our women and finds that these women have a sense of colour.

Sri Aurobindo: I hope they are not giving it up under modern influence.

Disciple: Sari, though graceful, is not good enough for active work, it is inconvenient.

Sri Aurobindo: Why? The Romans conquered the world in their togas. Plenty of Indian women work with saris on. When this craze for utility — that is the modern tendency — comes, beauty dies; people now look at everything from the point of utility as if beauty were nothing.

Disciple: But beauty and utility can be combined, I believe. I have found at any rate, that the European dress for men gives one a push for work and activity, while the Indian dhoti gives lethargy and a sense of ease.

Sri Aurobindo: That does not prevent the European dress from being ugly. I have seen plenty of people leading an active life with the dhoti. The most utilitarian dress is shorts and a shirt.

Disciple: But nowadays European ladies have made many innovations, they go about in shorts without stockings.

Sri Aurobindo: I see. At one time they used to cover the whole body except hands and face. I remember an incident in London. Bapubhai Majumdar was coming down from the bathroom in his hotel with his feet bare. A lady who came out of her room suddenly saw him. She ran to the manager and complained that the gentleman was going about half naked in the hotel! The manager called Bapubhai and told him not to do so! Do you know this Bapubhai — he was at Baroda.

Disciple: Yes, he was seen once being stopped by the police on the road for a breach of traffic rule. He gave such an eloquent lecture in English that the policeman was flabbergasted.

Sri Aurobindo (*laughing*)**:** That must be him; he was my first friend in Baroda. He took me to his house and I stayed there for some time. He was a nice man; only, some would say 'volatile and mercurial'.

♍

12 OCTOBER 1942

Disciple: We have heard, and partly known, that the experience of delight is possible on the higher planes. Is it possible to experience beauty on these planes?

Sri Aurobindo: Beauty and delight are inalienable in the ultimate analysis, or rather in the ultimate experience on the higher planes.

Disciple: Could the experience of beauty be compatible with Shankara's conception of the Absolute?

Sri Aurobindo: In his conception, experience of delight you can have, but of beauty? I don't think so. There is no lakshana —

characteristic quality — of beauty there in the Brahman according to Shankara. There is only the Self-existent and its Delight — white delight, if you like, but the colourful play of beauty would only be a figure in it and therefore unreal.

Disciple: Is form inseparable from the experience of beauty?

Sri Aurobindo: On the plane of matter it seems so, but it is not true on the planes of consciousness above Mind. There, beauty can be formless.

Disciple: There are people who experience deep peace but no delight in the Brahmic consciousness.

Sri Aurobindo: In my own case the Sachchidananda as Brahman comes more easily as a constant experience, and Ananda comes in to complete it, so to say. Delight is the essential Reality of existence.

Disciple: But many people are satisfied with the experience of the immutable aspect of the Brahman.

Sri Aurobindo: It depends. If you approach the Absolute negatively, that is to say, as a negation — you reach a more and more negative value. If you take up the positive side it leads you to a more and more positive value.

Disciple: Then why do the artists say that form is indispensable for art-creation?

Sri Aurobindo: We were speaking of the experience of beauty. But if you speak of art-creation then one can say that form is indispensable for that.

Disciple: Tagore agrees here — that form is indispensable for the creation of beauty in art.

Sri Aurobindo: But even there the form which gives the experience of beauty is not something apart from the Spirit. In the experience of the Brahman, the essential beauty is there without which the thing would not be beautiful. In the experience of beauty you can perceive two distinct elements: the form and the spiritual

element of beauty. But the formal beauty is only an expression of that spiritual beauty; it is not something quite separate. Of course, the mind can make a distinction and speak of them as two distinct things.

Disciple: What is the connection between spirituality and art?

Sri Aurobindo: One can say that spirituality is the basis of art. Art expresses, or tries to express, the soul of things. The true soul of things is the divine element in them. Then spirituality, which is the discipline to come into conscious contact with the Divine, has a place, and a big place, in art.

In a sense spirituality is the highest art, the art of life; for it aims at creating a life of beauty, pure in life, faultless in rhythm, replete with strength, illumined with light, and vibrant with delight.

ON CONGRESS AND POLITICS

7 MARCH 1924

The Khilafat had ended two days back, on the 5th.

Disciple: The Khilafat is steam-rollered.

Sri Aurobindo: It is quite right that it should be gone; the new republic seems thorough and solid in its working.

Disciple: I doubt if the Turks were right in taking the step because now the opinion of other Muslim countries would go against them.

Sri Aurobindo: Opinion can go to the dogs! It was not by opinion that Kamal defeated the Greeks!

Disciple: But would he be now popular in Turkey?

Sri Aurobindo: He does not care for popularity.

Disciple: The allegiance of other Muslims to the Khilafat had all along been theoretical and the tie of sympathy very weak and had no hold on life. As a matter of fact, it was the Indian Muslims who fought against the Turks in Mesopotamia during the First World War.

Sri Aurobindo: The Emir of Afghanistan is the only external power to whom the Indian Muslims can look up to.

Disciple: There are tendencies among the Muslims showing that fanaticism may disintegrate.

Sri Aurobindo: That is not sufficient because it would not change their whole outlook. What is wanted is some new religious movement among the Mahomedans which would remodel their religion and change the stamp of their temperament. For instance, Bahaism in Persia which has given quite a different stamp to their temperament.

On the 6th it was announced that the Khalifa had to leave Turkey within ten days. Reuter had cabled: "The chief wife of the Khalifa was prostrate and the chief eunuch has been fasting for the last three days." Sri Aurobindo laughed loudly saying "How funny this Reuters correspondent seems to be!"

Ismet Pasha had remarked: "We are in Constantinople because we fought the Greeks and the Khalifa. The sympathy of the people was due to our being strong and not to the presence of the Khalifa."

Sri Aurobindo: The first four were real Khalifas. Afterwards it became a political institution.

Disciple: The fasting of the chief eunuch is a form of Satyagraha! But the deposition of the Khalifa is dramatic.

Sri Aurobindo: It is rather comic than dramatic.

The Pondicherry politics came in for discussion. Monin Naik from Chandernagore arrived today (7th).

Sri Aurobindo: Our people have not yet got the political sense. If they can once break the hegemony of the white clique here then they can attempt anything afterwards.

Disciple: I tried to explain to our Chandernagore friends that all the Indians in the Council must join and shake off the white people. Then they can do anything. But somehow they did not take it well. Our people lack backbone.

Sri Aurobindo: Not only backbone but common sense.

≈

8 MARCH 1924

Disciple: *The Servant* has written a long leader on the Khilafat.

Sri Aurobindo: What does it say?

Disciple: That it is a momentous thing.

Disciple: What is momentous — the Khilafat or its abolition?

Disciple: *The Servant's* writing about it is a momentous thing. (*Laughter*)

Disciple: Abul Kalam and Yakub Husain are satisfied with Kamal's action, while Pickthall and Fazlul Huque have found fault with Kamal; they have even abused and accused him.

Disciple: There is a proposal to have a Khalifa who would be only the religious head.

Sri Aurobindo: Nobody will acknowledge the Khalifa unless he has power. Did you read Gandhi's letter to Mahomed Ali? He almost congratulates him on having his daughter sick! He does not mean it evidently, but a very strange way of writing.

And what is this new paper, the *Voice of India*?

Disciple: It is edited by Natarajan who is also conducting the *Social Reformer* in Bombay.

Disciple: When he first started the *Social Reformer* he was called Nitrogen and therefore an inert, odourless and colourless gas!

Sri Aurobindo: Perhaps a very good description of him.

Disciple: It seems that the Independents and the Swarajists may join in the obstruction against Government.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. There seems to be a chance. Olivier's salt-tax speech has something to do with it.

≈

11 MARCH 1924

Disciple: Did you read Mahomed Ali's statement about the Khilafat?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, I saw it, but I did not go through the whole statement.

Disciple: He says that the new assembly at Angora [*now Ankara*] has no right to depose the Khalifa and that now there is even more need of the Khilafat agitation in India!

Disciple: But what does he propose to do over and above writing and speaking?

Sri Aurobindo: He says that the lion of Islam is not dead though the jackals are shouting around it.

Disciple: It would be interesting now to watch the development since Yakub Husain and others have favoured the Angora decision and Mahomed Ali opposes it. There may be two parties among the Muslims. *The Servant* points out that the new republic is secular and not religious.

Sri Aurobindo: In the first four Khalifas there was the reality of the Khilafat. They were the centres of Islamic culture and had some spirituality. After that the Umayad and other dynasties came and it became more and more religious and external. When it passed into the hands of the Turks it became a mere political institution without the fact of it.

Disciple: The nationalists seem to be in the majority in the Indian Central Assembly.

Sri Aurobindo: It does not seem to be certain yet; there is every chance that the budget would be thrown out.

Disciple: At last Dr. Gaur has fallen off (from the nationalist group).

Sri Aurobindo: I knew that he would. He has nothing very deep in him, only a gift of speech and sometimes he tries to show himself more intelligent than he is. He was with me at Cambridge and I have heard him speak at the College Union. He repeated during one speech three times: "The Egyptians rose up to a man!"

Disciple: In Nagpur they have granted Rs. 2/- per month for a minister's pay!

Sri Aurobindo: At last the Government has come out and the Governor is taking over the 'transferred' subjects.

Disciple: In Bengal also the Governor has vetoed the resolution of the Assembly.

Sri Aurobindo: The veto is with regard to the transferred subjects. This concerns the 'reserved' subjects. The Government has simply to ignore the resolution and the budget is to be passed. By the way, what is the average income of an Indian?

Disciple: Rs. 30/- per annum.

Disciple: Rs. 2 ½ per month.

Sri Aurobindo: The *New India* is particular about giving the average income to the ministers! If the average income increases then his pay also increases. Very fair proposal!

Disciple: So, now there is notification and taking over the transferred departments also. These Reforms are very funny! They can allow and withdraw whatever they like from the transferred subjects. It means they can do anything they like. Wonderful Reforms, while the whole power is in the hands of the Englishmen! (*Turning to Sri Aurobindo*) Do you remember what you said when the Reforms were proposed? You said: Everything given by the British up till now is a shadow and these Reforms are a huge shadow!

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, I remember.[14]

[14] Sri Aurobindo was pressed by Mrs. Besant to give his opinion on the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms. For a long time he avoided making any pronouncement. At last, when pressed again, he wrote an article for her paper *New India* on condition that his name should not be published. So the article appeared on 10 August 1918 under the name of "An Indian Nationalist".

In that article he said in effect: The Reforms are like a Chinese-puzzle. Even a Chinese-puzzle can be solved but this one cannot be solved. Everything given by

≈

14 MARCH 1924

Today Sri Aurobindo expressed disgust at the lukewarm attitude of Pandit Malaviya: "The whole affair is disgusting; it is characteristic of our country. They may wreck the party."

Someone raised the topic of sanitation in Calcutta.

Disciple: Every city deserves to be burnt down after an interval of 300 years according to Charaka. Calcutta is due to be burnt.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, after some years it becomes physically and morally unfit to live in.

Disciple: Mrs. Besant is bringing up each and every problem of India in her papers and at the end always insists on her idea of calling a National Convention. That seems her panacea for everything! And the non-cooperators have been doing nothing but opposing the Swarajists.

Sri Aurobindo: What the non-cooperators are doing is simply absurd.

Disciple: Some Congressmen in the Godavari District have left their propaganda of non-cooperation and taken to village reconstruction because enthusiasm has waned among the people. No one comes to attend meetings, no money is subscribed to the Tilak Swaraj Fund. Khadi does not evoke response.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, I had that experience in 1909 when I was in Bengal. That gave me an insight into my countrymen. After the arrests and deportations we used to hold meetings in the College Square and some sixty or seventy persons used to attend, mostly passers-by; and I had the honour to preside over several of those meetings!

---

the Government till now was a mere shadow and these Reforms are a huge shadow.

Disciple: In Gujarat we had the same experience in the National Educational programme. The public would not support an independent national school or college.

A disciple reported the arrival of a Bengali teacher at Pondicherry to see Sri Aurobindo. He had joined the non-cooperation movement and stayed in the Sabarmati Ashram for seven months and learnt spinning and weaving. He was going to Rajkot as the headmaster of the national school there.

Disciple: He is very solicitous about humanity and wants your Yoga to help humanity.

Sri Aurobindo: Humanity has, fortunately, a sound head, and so it is safe from its saviours.

Disciple: There are so many of them; and yet the wonder is that humanity is still living!

Sri Aurobindo: Quite so; it is living in spite of them!

In the afternoon a Pondicherrian who had returned from Saigon came and wanted that Sri Aurobindo should cure his wife by his yogic power.

Disciple: I told him that it was not possible. Then he said "What is the use of his Yoga if he does not help humanity?"

Sri Aurobindo: Humanity means his wife or what?

♓

8 APRIL 1924

Disciple: Did you read Gandhiji's opposition to Council entry?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, he is opposed to it because it is against Ahimsa! It is negative and not constructive. The same was said by

Tagore about non-cooperation!

Disciple: Rajagopalachari says one yard of Khaddar means one step towards Swaraj.

Sri Aurobindo: It will be a very long way in that case.

Disciple: I hear that Gandhiji is getting text-books prepared for schools.

Sri Aurobindo: One book will begin with how to grow cotton and end with lessons on weaving, another on cooking and another on how to clean latrines.

Disciple: The last would be in the higher standards! (*Laughter*) In his commentary on the Gita he tries to show that the war is between good and evil tendencies in man, — it is only a figure of speech.

Sri Aurobindo: So, Sri Krishna says to Arjuna: "You may kill the bad passions or evil tendencies but do not be sorry, really they are not going to be killed!" Who kills whom? Thus the whole thing is an allegory. But is it?

♓

9 APRIL 1924

Disciple: Did you see Gandhiji's reply to the sub-assistant surgeons letter requesting him to give up the field of action because of his ill-health? It also says that he should retire because of his need of spirituality and also because of his use of medical aid against his own declared opinions.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, I read it. There is the same mixture of which I have already spoken, only by his reading of books, I am afraid, he has made it worse. There was a mixture of Tolstoy, Christianity and Jainism. Now he has added the Veda, Koran and Gita to it.

Disciple: Did he not see that Ahimsa applied that way would not succeed?

Sri Aurobindo: Why? That is *his* gospel. People have to see if they want to accept. It may fail in the collectivity but he may and can follow it individually.

But, as I say, the whole turn of his mind is like that of the Europeans. I doubt if he ever had the grasp of the ideas of Indian philosophy. Besides, the whole trend of his being is vital, he always tries to put things into life and make a rule of it. That again is the European tendency — everything to be turned into a code, a rule. Only, he puts it in Indian terms.

I don't see any use of his saying: "So long as others have not got good Khaddar I will not use fine Khaddar." It may come to saying: "So long as others are not educated I shall not learn, or for that matter, so long as others do not get food I will starve."

Disciple: There are disparaging reports about the political situation in Maharashtra and Andhra. People's enthusiasm has ebbed and it is hard to find office-bearers for the Congress.

Sri Aurobindo: Our people are wonderful — they always want some excitement. They have not yet realised that politics is a serious affair and of long breath. They say: "Give us Swaraj in one year or sensation!"

Disciple: I have been in the non-cooperation movement and worked in it for some time. My own feeling is that Gandhiji would look up to St. Francis, who licked the wounds of the lepers, as his ideal.

Sri Aurobindo: Licking the leper would do the leper no good and may do harm to St. Francis.

Even in these days, apart from what our people did in the past, the Indian way is to do things but not to make it a rule of life. They do certain things to get rid of the obstructing Sanskara.

Disciple: That is what Ramakrishna did — going and sweeping the quarters of the untouchables — to get rid of the Sanskara of the Brahmin and his feeling of superiority. He did it as a part and process of Sadhana.

Sri Aurobindo: That is what I mean by the Indian way — I said that once before.

ϑ

31 MAY 1924

The topic was Gandhiji's statement that the Swarajists must walk out of the Congress. For being a Congressman one has to believe in the five-fold boycott, then one has to spin, and stop drinking if he is doing it and unite with the Muslims.

Disciple: You saw the statement of Mahatmaji?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. He says in effect: "First, you have to believe in the five boycotts; I tell you it *is* hard and not an easy thing to do."

Disciple: Then to spin is harder still.

Sri Aurobindo: If you comply with the requirements he says Swaraj can be easily attained, though he does not give the timelimit.

Disciple: The argument he gives is that two parties cannot carry on the Government.

Sri Aurobindo: In modern times, many European governments are carried on by coalitions.

Disciple: He seems to be trying some kind of yoga also.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. Do you know anything about it? I saw his article on Brahmacharya but it did not contain consistent thought. Once he says that a strong mind has a strong body and then he says that as one progresses in mental development the body must get

weak. He also finds a connection between lust and taste.

Disciple: He wants to stick to the mental consciousness and to the ordinary nature and tries to master the movements of nature from the mental consciousness helped, if possible, by prayer. He has hardly even a cursory acquaintance with the division of Purusha and Prakriti, so necessary to establish the basis of the spiritual life.

Disciple: The prayers in the Ashram are a fixed routine.

Disciple: You know, I once conducted a prayer in Nava Vidhan Brahmo Samaj! It was greatly appreciated while I uttered absolute platitudes, I believe.

Sri Aurobindo: They only appreciated it, that's all?

Disciple: No, they said: "It was poetic and very fine!"

Sri Aurobindo: This kind of prayer is current in England. It is very external and mechanical.

ॐ

7 JUNE 1924

Rasputin, the Court mystic of Russia was the subject of the talk for some time. This Rasputin had suddenly become a spiritual man. He was a villager and suddenly got some power of the vital plane. He influenced people with his eyes. He had used his power for lower ends.

Disciple: There is a pronouncement today about the eligibility to the A.I.C.C. (All India Congress Committee).

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, it makes very strange reading! This method of purification which is proposed seems absurd. One can follow up this kind of proposal by saying, "All the members must produce a certificate that they have cooked their own food, cleaned their own

latrine etc."

Disciple: Sir Sankaran Nair has lost his case against O'Dwyer.

Sri Aurobindo: It was a foregone conclusion.

II

17 JUNE 1924

Disciple: Tagore's internationalism seems to have received a rude shock in China at the passing of the Japanese Exclusion Bill.

Disciple: It seems from his writing that he is an internationalist first and looks on nationalism as something dispensable.

Sri Aurobindo: But you must have nations before you can have 'inter' between them.

Disciple: He seems to argue the other way round: if you work for internationalism then nationalism will take care of itself.

Disciple: It does not take care of itself — others take care of it; that is the difficulty.

Sri Aurobindo: Internationalism is all right, we accept it on its own plane. But we must have nations first.

Disciple: When he finds people do not accept his idea he says: "Great ideals can afford to wait — their failure in such matters means nothing."

Sri Aurobindo: It seems only a mental construction without any idea of the reality. In this way sometimes people injure the very cause for which they stand. I should be on good terms with my neighbour, but that does not mean that I should allow him to come into my house and occupy it.

Disciple: He advises the Indians to extend the hand of friendship and help Europe in its forlorn condition.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, it will take the hand and give a kick in return.

Disciple: Or perhaps it will take the hand and search our pockets.

Sri Aurobindo: There is nothing left in the pockets now.

Disciple: It is like some people who say we must help the poor; therefore, let us become poor ourselves.

II

19 JUNE 1924

Disciple: The Swarajists have a difficult task.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. The resolution which Gandhi proposes amounts to an ultimatum to the Swarajists.

By the way, what is the meaning of Satyagraha?

Disciple: Mahatmaji differentiates between passive resistance and Satyagraha.

Sri Aurobindo: I do not see much in it. Passive resistance also is resorted to because one is convinced of the Truth of ones side.

Disciple: Mahatmaji's definition differs. According to him Satyagraha is not merely a political weapon; and secondly, it conveys the idea of Truth with non-violence as its necessary corollary.

Sri Aurobindo: But passive resistance can be done in all the fields of life; he himself did it. Perhaps passive resistance is a plain and unpretentious expression while Satyagraha is high-sounding. It conveys to others the idea that what one stands for is the Truth. Some may find an air of moral superiority in it.

Disciple: But about the spinning clause I know that even in the

heyday of non-cooperation no one spun. There is also a resolution that the provinces should carry out the orders of the A.I.C.C. I wonder why that is brought forward.

Sri Aurobindo: It is to bring Bengal under the No-changers.

Disciple: But formerly he talked of provincial autonomy in the Congress organisation.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. But now it does not suit him, then it was suitable. One accepts the truth that suits one at the time. He may be wanting to keep the whole organisation in his hands.

Disciple: Formerly he said that if the Congress did not agree with him he would work separately.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. That was suitable at that time. He is perfectly justified in imposing all conditions on his own organisation; but to do it on the Congress is hardly justifiable.

Disciple: The leaders, I believe, have a conspiracy for supplying the ten tolas of cotton spun.

Sri Aurobindo: You mean with their wives! (.)

II

22 JUNE 1924

There was talk about the Gopinath Saha resolution in the Congress. The *Forward* came out with Dhingra's statement.

Disciple: Mahatmaji says that his faith in the programme is daily increasing. Only, the difficulty is that others seem to be losing faith in it in the same proportion.

Sri Aurobindo: Probably it is rolling back to its own source!

Disciple: Khadi now has become a fashion, so much so that one can't attend a public meeting without Khadi on his person.

Disciple: The logic is something like this: The capacity to depend upon ourselves in the matter of clothing would give us economic independence.

Sri Aurobindo: If all began to spin and weave there would be no time left to produce other things. We might have to import them from outside. One may put on hand-spun and hand-woven cloth and the Charkha also may be used; there is absolutely no objection to these things. But everything taken out of its proper place becomes ridiculous.

Disciple: I was instructed to take a particular kind of bath as a treatment by Mahatmaji. He was against using medicine.

Disciple: What would happen in case of appendicitis? A British surgeon, medical science, etc. may be necessary.

II

30 JUNE 1924

Sri Aurobindo: What became of the resolution in the A.I.C.C.?

Disciple: It seems Mahatmaji has climbed down.

Sri Aurobindo: It is surprising because he had declared that he was 'unmoved'.

Disciple: The Swarajists had only to go to him and he seemed ready to climb down.

Sri Aurobindo: They probably went to him seeing the penalty clause, and also to ascertain how far he would climb down.

Disciple: The last resolution — about litigants being allowed to appear in law-courts — was ruled out of order. But in actual practice all these resolutions are shelved.

Sri Aurobindo: You do, and can do, all these things as 'practical' men; but how can you be a conscientious non-cooperator at the

same time?

Disciple: Hanumanth Rao drew attention to the pleaders' plight and sought permission for them to continue legal practice.

Sri Aurobindo: So, there will be litigants and no pleader!

♊

3 JULY 1924

There was talk about the resolution of the A.I.C.C. concerning litigants. T. Prakasham's case of donation of Rs. 25,000/- came up also. He was not able to sell his bungalow and wants "somebody to buy it". He had to defend himself in court. His two sons are light-fingered according to report.

Sri Aurobindo: What is their age?

Disciple: One is twelve and the other fifteen.

Disciple: Then it is the age for stealing. I stole up to my fortieth year and even this morning I stole a chrysanthemum from the Telegraph Office garden. X wanted to pluck more flowers. But I hurried him away.

Disciple: What a situation! From planning political dacoities to pilfering flowers!

Sri Aurobindo: Why? It is not a fall. It is an ascent, — that was Rajasic, this is Sattwic. If you steal, you must do it in the proper way and in the right spirit. All property is theft and so when you steal you steal from a thief! (*Laughter*)

Disciple: When I came out of the compound I was thinking that this was the only way to equalise property. Mr. A has one plant, now I will have one and so each of us will have one!

Disciple: But do you want everyone to steal from the Telegraph

Office garden?

Disciple: I do not mind if someone stole from here; only, he must not tell me, because if he asks I wont give. (*Laughter*)

Disciple: The first condition is that you must not be found out!

♊

4 JULY 1924

The subject was Gandhi's article "Defeated and Humbled" in which he bemoans the situation in the Congress and says that it was a clear victory for Mr. C. R. Das.

Sri Aurobindo attended to the correspondence and then began: "Did you read Gandhi's article?"

Disciple: I heard about it, it is a long wail.

Sri Aurobindo: 'Wail' is not the word. He could not restrain his tears, though he says it is hard to make him shed tears. He also says that the whole sitting was frivolous.

Disciple: Even in the heyday of non-cooperation the A.I.C.C. people voted in the same fashion as they did now. Then they voted for him; now they voted against him.

Disciple: That makes the whole difference: that makes it unreal and frivolous etc.

Sri Aurobindo: Generally, in such moments people do not speak; they keep it to themselves but he comes out with it. It is all about how it affected the 'I' and how he felt and how it all touched him!

Disciple: He becomes so much identified with the work in hand that he can hardly have that detached self-view which is necessary to detect the central mistake.

Sri Aurobindo: If the resolutions he has brought forward are defeated, or if a certain resolution is ruled out of order, there is no reason why he should feel hurt, and that has nothing to do with the work for the country. He objects to Dr. Choithram's resolution and he is very much hurt at that shielding (Deshpande) resolution. About the Serajgunj resolution also Gandhi has felt much.

II

15 JULY 1924

The Gujarat Provincial Congress Committee passed the compulsory spinning resolution with the penalty clause.

Sri Aurobindo (*turning to a disciple*)**:** Gujarat is outdoing itself.

Disciple: First month three thousand yards and then five thousand yards.

Sri Aurobindo: Who will spin for V. J. Patel?

Disciple: His daughter may do it for him.

Sri Aurobindo: If spinning by proxy is allowed, then it is easy.

Disciple: Mr. C. M. Desai opposed the motion.

Sri Aurobindo: Who will spin for him?

Disciple: He has lost his wife many years ago, and has no child.

Sri Aurobindo: Then his opposition is very much self-interested.

Disciple: Who will supply them with cotton?

Disciple: Bajaj.

Disciple: But each one must grow his own cotton!

9

2 AUGUST 1924

Today Motilal Nehru's letter to Sri Aurobindo was received.

The talk turned first to the explanation given by a French scientist about the twinkling of stars. He says that the azote particles come across the atmosphere and that is why the planets being near do not twinkle, while the stars being far do.

Disciple: It is just an intellectual way of believing, I am afraid.

Sri Aurobindo: It is not at all an intelligent explanation.

Disciple: Apart from theories, why do the stars twinkle?

Sri Aurobindo: You must ask them! When we were young we were told that the planets reflect the light of the Sun while the stars emit it and therefore they twinkle.

(*Turning to a disciple*) Did you read Motilal's letter asking for contribution to his paper?

Disciple: Yes, I did.

Sri Aurobindo: Evidently the Swarajists are very much afraid of the Mahatma.

Disciple: But they have "love and esteem"!

Sri Aurobindo: It is dread and fear — more than anything else.

ଌ

13 SEPTEMBER 1924

The Tarakeshwar affair was being settled. The first terms that were proposed did not meet with Sri Aurobindo's approval. But next day an open letter from Swami Vishwananda appeared agreeing with C. R. Das: The Mahant abdicates in favour of Prabhat Giri and the power of management of the temple rests with a committee that can, if necessary, dismiss the Mahant and the committee would

appoint a separate Manager of Estates.

Sri Aurobindo: If we have our own Government we could throw out the Mahant and settle the affair once for all; but under a foreign rule if Das can establish the authority of the committee legally, it would be the cleverest thing to do, so that in case of emergency the committee can enforce its mandate by law. As it is, the whole law is against the public. After all Das is a man who 'muddles through' — he acts on his intuitions and impulses and somehow muddles through a difficulty.

Disciple: He is very impulsive.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, impulses are vital intuitions. Not that he commits no mistakes. He goes on committing mistakes and tries to rectify them and somehow comes to something.

Disciple: He may bungle into Swaraj.

Sri Aurobindo: If not Swaraj, he may stumble into some way towards it. There are some people like Mustafa Kamal who never commit a mistake and everything about them is organised. Das is not that type.

Disciple: Kamal lords it over everyone and I am afraid that makes him unpopular.

Sri Aurobindo: That, every strong man does.

Disciple: Even his lieutenants try to follow him in that respect and people find it difficult to get on with them.

Sri Aurobindo (*after a time*)**:** That is perhaps inevitable when you require people who will take the extreme step. Such men can hardly remain calm and yet be extremists. Few can be extremists while retaining their calmness.

An article in *Young India* gave the list of books Mahatmaji read in jail.

Disciple: It contains at the end Gandhiji's estimate of Christianity. He differs, he says, from orthodox Christianity. He believes in the symbolic interpretation of Christ, Mary and the Holy Ghost.

Sri Aurobindo: A lot of Christians also believe the same.

Disciple: He also believes that everyone must be crucified in order to attain Christhood; he would not, he says, put a limited interpretation on the Sermon on the Mount. But he finds Hinduism quite sufficient for his spiritual development. He has read the Upanishads and finds them very grand, but he cannot agree with some of their ideas; he finds them difficult to understand even.

Sri Aurobindo: All that could hardly prove that he is not a Christian in his make-up.

Disciple: He has written a long paragraph on the *Mahabharata.* He finds it a great poem, and he is especially charmed by the poet's consistently working out the law of Karma. The mighty Krishna dies like an ordinary man; the great Arjuna is robbed by the Kabas — his Gandiva, the famous bow, notwithstanding; and even Dharmaraja is made to feel the unpleasant odour of hell for having lowered the ideal of Truth.

Sri Aurobindo: What is there the cause and what is the effect? One man strikes the blow and the other dies, so one is the cause and the other is the effect!

Disciple: He has also read Goethe's *Faust* and finds that the heroine (Henrietta) could not find peace until she took to the spinning-wheel.

Sri Aurobindo: My God! (*Turning to a disciple*) Do you know Mrs. Besant, Jaykar and Natarajan have decided to spin?

Disciple: It is a fine trio! I do not know how long their enthusiasm is going to last.

Disciple: Now the proposal made by the Mahatma is very

simple.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. Instead of four annas you have to give two thousand yards per month.

Disciple: Those who do not will cease to be members of the Congress.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, that is the penalty.

Disciple: Penalty for whom? the man or the Congress?

Disciple: Have you not used the word 'wheel' in your writings in the *Arya*? We may send the cutting to the Mahatma!

Sri Aurobindo: I may have used 'Brahman's wheel' or some such expression.

Disciple: Does it not turn?

Sri Aurobindo: It turns out men and also Gandhis.

♍

10 OCTOBER 1925

Sri Aurobindo referred to Sir Moropant Joshi of Nagpur. He asked a disciple: "Do you remember him?"

Disciple: I have forgotten him altogether.

Sri Aurobindo: I met him in Bombay when we took the vow with Dr. Deshmukh to secure the independence of India. He was also one of those who took the oath and soon afterwards turned round. When I was going to Surat to attend the Congress I got down at Nagpur and had to give a lecture in the theatre there and I saw Moropant sitting there on one of the front benches gaping at me!

♎

23 OCTOBER 1925

There was a report in the press about Mahatma Gandhi's going to Cutch. He seemed to believe that he was approaching his death. There was a statement that he was going to Cutch to take rest and also to attend to the grievances of the Cutch people.

Disciple: His idea is that he would like to do 'spiritual' work for the country.

Disciple: Nowadays 'spiritual' is a word of which the meaning is known to very few people.

Sri Aurobindo: In ancient India they knew the meaning. But now obviously the Indians have got the European idea of spirituality. It is not a very deep idea. If you have strong emotion, or strong passion, or a particular type of thought — that is what they call spirituality. Or it is something bound up with ethics, morality and philanthropy.

In Europe they use the word 'spirit' in contrast to 'matter'. Whatever is not matter is spirit; and so if any man has high mental ideals and an aesthetic turn of mind or some ideas of social service they call him 'spiritual'.

Disciple: When I first came across the use of the word *femme spirituelle* in France during the First World War, I took it in the Indian sense and it was later on that I came to know that it only meant any witty or vivacious girl.

Sri Aurobindo: Because in French *esprit* means 'mind', 'wit' and such other things.

Disciple: During the war a doctor — probably Dr. Lebon — of France took photographs of departed spirits and immediately after the war there was a mania in France for consulting 'spiritualists', to get messages from the departed souls.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, that is another definition of spirituality or rather spiritualism, in Europe.

Disciple: The one thing they accept is the physical body and in France they have come to accept vital force or 'living matter'.

Sri Aurobindo: The French find it difficult to go beyond the intellect. Other European nations are no better. They are satisfied if they get a 'proof'. Newman saw that evidence does not prove anything and that you can prove what you want by using the same evidence. They can't understand that the laws governing the planes behind the physical plane may be quite different from those that obtain here.

For instance, Oliver Lodge is a great scientist and he asserts that the voice which came to him was that of Raymond, his son, who had died in the war. He says that it is proved beyond doubt because it spoke in the way in which his son used to speak and recounted things which only Raymond knew and also spoke about certain family matters.

Now, if a voice, or a spirit, comes to you and says that it is so and so, it does not, in the least, mean that it is that man. Any spirit from that plane can come and appear as that man. Europeans can't believe that a being on the subtle planes can have knowledge of things by means which are quite different from those we have to use. It can know many things. Not only that, it can catch hold of the astral body and the nervous form of the individual and appear before you. But that would not prove that it is that man. You can even take its photograph perhaps. But that is not the astral or the subtle body. It is the body just behind the physical that you see.

But Europeans are mere children in these things. They take the laws of this plane and try to apply them to the subtle planes. Col. Wedgewood, when he came here, could not understand anything when someone told him that I was doing spiritual work. He asked: "What is spirituality?" But in spite of an explanation he could not

understand what spirituality is. If Europeans had to pass through the experience of the stone-throwing incident which occurred in 41 Rue François Martin [*the Guest House*], they would at once take the incident as a proof of some spirit throwing it. In fact, it only proves that "stones fell" and that "they were thrown by some agency without the use of physical means". That is all you can say. It is a matter of experience; one has oneself to enter into these planes and find out the laws obtaining there. There are so many possibilities and you have yet to find out which is the fact in a particular case.

♎

24 OCTOBER 1925

There was talk about the Franco-Riff war, — about the retreat of the French and Spanish armies from Morocco.

Disciple: Reuter's agency has given the message.

Sri Aurobindo: Do you believe Reuter's is an infallible agency? Then Lenin must have died seven or eight times, and Anvar Pasha more than six times! (*Laughter*)

Very often it serves the interests of one or the other of the big powers. Do you know how they supplied information during the war to the outer world? There was a German air-raid — probably at Scarborough. The news given out was that a few buildings were destroyed, some few men wounded. Whereas as a matter of fact, after the truth was found: 800 men were killed, many more wounded and three streets destroyed!

Disciple: In the army in France we used our wireless apparatus for getting news from all the fronts; even there, it was lying pure and simple.

Disciple: The agency quotes official figures.

Sri Aurobindo: Do you think that official figures are all quite correct? It is a huge machine for manufacturing lies!

Disciple: They must manipulate their information!

Disciple: That is part of the game.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, they must give out authentic lies! All the news that was given out officially about Riga was, as everybody knows, a lie from top to bottom.

The talk turned to an organisation in Bengal in which the organiser made a declaration that it would use hand-made yarn for its looms, without really intending to do so, or with a view to set up one or two such looms and take monetary help from the Khadi Board, keeping the rest of the looms running with machine-made yam.

Sri Aurobindo: We, in India, lack character; it will take us long to have character.

Disciple: Then, where is the hope for India? The other day you said that India was suffering from vital depression and was afraid of new thought.

Sri Aurobindo: I did not say we have no minds or brains. I said we have no character; character has nothing to do with the intellect.

Disciple: But then these nations that are free, have they all got the best virtues in them?

Sri Aurobindo: I did not say that. But they work, they act; we can't, we begin one thing today and leave it tomorrow.

Disciple: Then where is any hope?

Disciple: I think freedom will come when it can no longer be prevented. At present much of what we do is speech. Pramatha Nath Chowdhury in an article says "Nowadays it has become a fashion to say in speeches — these times are not for speech but for action." And on that there is a speech! (*Laughter*)

Sri Aurobindo: We also remember to have done something like that in the past.

Disciple: Why, all the leaders today are only speaking; and *devajāti*, the divine race, was born after speaking and *satyayuga* began by speech!

Sri Aurobindo: Sometimes people get freedom by bluffing and we know bluffing well by this time; or maybe, God's Grace can give freedom to India!

Disciple: We know at least bluffing well.

Sri Aurobindo: That, too, the English taught us! (*Laughter*)

♓

7 APRIL 1926

There was a reference to a letter of Lord Reading to the Nizam of Hyderabad in which he says: "No Indian State can deal with the British on terms of political equality" and that "the British are the Paramount Power in India."

Disciple: This time the Indian Government has been outspoken to the Indian princes probably because other princes also have begun to insist on the terms of their treaties being observed. The Gaekwad, for instance, asked back Kathiawad the other day. The Indian Government wants to prevent such a movement among the princes.

Sri Aurobindo: The Indian princes may be anything personally, but as a class they lack courage and political wisdom.

Disciple: Taraknath Das in his book points out that the Indian princes could help in the work of national regeneration. They could even take part in international politics.

Sri Aurobindo: Many things are desirable, but they do not

always come true. No doubt, if the princes were politicians they could hasten the march of freedom to a very great extent. They could create real centres of power within their dominions which would serve when the time for revolution came. That was the idea in the Gaekwad's mind when he began but it was not carried through.

Disciple: There was a Praja Mandal which recently protested against the increase of taxes.

Sri Aurobindo: I do not mean that the Indian States must adopt parliamentary institutions, or even that India must copy them from Europe. You think that the opposition between the State and the popular party must always be there. That is the European idea. It is not necessary to have that kind of opposition at all.

Disciple: Was there no such thing in ancient India?

Sri Aurobindo: There was; you need not have the same thing today. In India the communal freedom was very great. The communities had great powers and the State had no autocratic authority. The State was a kind of general supervising agency of all the communities. What these modern princes can do is to create great centres of life amongst their subjects, so that they may be the seats of real power and life of the nation. The princes need not take part as leaders; but they can help the growth of the nation.

Disciple: In olden times, had the villages also such great powers?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, they had. It is the European idea that makes you think that the parliamentary form or constitution is the best. We had great communal liberty and the communities were the centres of power and of national life. The king could not infringe on the right of the commune.

Disciple: The communities must be strong and living enough not to allow their rights to be snatched away.

Sri Aurobindo: It was so; the king had a continuity of policy from father to son and he could not infringe on the rights of the communes; and if these rights were interfered with the people at once made themselves felt. That was the form which the genius of the race had evolved. You think that this parliamentary government is the best form of government. In fact, that form has been a success nowhere except in England. In France, it is worse, in America, in spite of their being an Anglo-Saxon race, it has not succeeded.

Disciple: In Japan, is it the European form?

Sri Aurobindo: I don't think so. In Italy and in South Europe the parliamentary form is there but they all copied the German constitution and there is no reality behind the form.

I don't understand why everything should be centralised as in the parliamentary constitution. We must have different, numerous centres of culture and power, full of national life, spread all over the country and they must have political freedom to develop themselves.

Disciple: Village organisation can also help in the creation of such centres.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. But it is not by lectures and sermonising to the village people, as we are trying to do now.

Disciple: I have letters from a friend informing me that the organisation of co-operative societies has succeeded in Gujarat.

Sri Aurobindo: If you want to work in the village, you must take to a natural profession, go and settle down among the village people and be one of them. When they see that you are a practical man they will begin to trust you. If you go there and work hard for ten or fifteen years you will gain your status and you will be able to do something because they will be prepared to listen to you.

The parliamentary form would be hardly suitable for our people. Of course, it is not necessary that you should have today the

same old forms. But you can take the line of evolution and follow the bent of the genius of the race.

II

29 JUNE 1926

Disciple: What is the difference between European and Indian politics?

Sri Aurobindo: If you mean the politics of India today then there is absolutely no difference. It is a bad copy of Western politics, taking any catchwords, often even without any reference to realities. For instance, you introduce parliamentarian liberalism or the labour movement because Europe has got them. But there it is very real while here it is merely an idea and a name. Parliamentarianism is based upon educating public opinion and there the agitation has a direct bearing on their government and they have got to do it to take the masses with them at the polls. In India while we take up this form of agitation, of making a big noise, we forget that they have their own government while here it is not ours and therefore the agitation is futile.

There are three elements in European politics:

1. Mental idea or ideal of political and social life.
2. Interest of the communities or classes.
3. Machinery of Government.

Now, in Europe people believe and think that if they succeed in bringing about a definite form of government on the lines of certain ideals such as democracy, monarchy, socialism, communism etc., then all the problems of humanity will be solved. They follow a mental ideal which they think to be the only truth and they create public opinion and try to catch, or get hold of, the machinery of the State. Among all the conflicting ideals none has yet proved

successful. It was thought that democracy would be the most successful form but after experience it is proved that it is far from being a success.

Next comes the 'interests' of individuals and classes: It is really these interests which get the better of the mental ideal and succeed in getting hold of the 'Machinery of the State', i.e., power.

In the beginning it was the priest and the monarch with his aristocracy who ruled. Then the aristocracy, the fighting class, with the common man under it, and then came the middle class, the merchant class, which is now having the machinery of power under what is called democracy. And now there is the effort in countries like Russia where the proletariat is trying to rule.

Now for Machinery of the State: It is a rigid and hard centralization and mechanization of the life of the nation perfectly organised in all details to meet an aggression, to defend and to expand.

In the old Indian collective life there were three things:

1. Spontaneously growing free communal units.
2. The Dharma-idea.
3. Harmonising of national life by a central agency.

We had nothing of the mental ideal in politics. We had a spontaneous and a free growth of communities developing on their own lines. It was not so much a mental idea as an inner impulse or feeling, to express life in a particular form. Each such communal form of life — the village, the town, etc., which formed the unit of national life, was left free in its own internal management. The central authority never interfered with it.

There was not the idea of 'interests' in India as in Europe, i.e., each community was not fighting for its own interests; but there was rather the idea of Dharma — the function which the individual and the community have to fulfil in the larger national life. There

were caste organisations not based upon a religio-social basis as we find nowadays; they were more or less groups organised for a communal life. There were also religious communities like the Buddhists, Jains, etc. Each followed its own law — Swadharma — unhampered by the State. The State recognised the necessity of allowing such various forms of life to develop freely in order to give to the national spirit a richer expression.

Then over the two there was the central authority, whose function was not so much to legislate as to harmonise and see that everything was going on all right. It was administered by a Raja, in some cases, also, by an elected head of the clan, as in the instance of Gautama Buddha. Each ruled over either a small State or a group of small States or republics. One was not at the head to put his hands over all organisations and keep them down. If he interfered with them he was deposed because each of these organisations had its own laws which had been established for long ages. The machinery of the State also was not so mechanical as in the West — it was plastic and elastic.

This organisation we find in history perfected in the reign of Chandragupta and the Maurya dynasty. The period preceding this must have been one of great political development in India. Every department of national life, we can see, was in charge of a board or a committee with a minister at the head and each board looked after what we now would call its own department and was left free from undue interference of the central authority. The change of kings left these boards untouched and unaffected in their work. An organisation similar to that was found in the town and in the village and it was this organisation that was taken up by the Mahomedans when they came and it is that which the English also have taken up. The king as the absolute monarch was never an Indian idea. It was brought from Central Asia by the Mahomedans.

The English in accepting this system have disfigured it considerably. They have found ways to put their hands on and

grasp all the old organisations, using them merely as channels to establish more thoroughly the authority of the central power. They discourage every free organisation and every attempt at the manifestation of the free life of the community. Now attempts are being made to have co-operative societies in villages; there is also an effort at reviving the Panchayats. But these organisations cannot be revived once they have been crushed and even if they revived they would not be the same.

If the old organisation had lasted it would have been a successful rival of the modern form of government.

Disciple: Is it posssible to come back to old forms in modern times?

Sri Aurobindo: You need not come back to the old forms but you *can* retain the spirit which might create its own new forms. They could not last, firstly, because there was the flagging of national energy owing to various causes. Secondly, the country was too vast and the means of communication not efficient enough to permit all national forces being concentrated on a particular point. Chandragupta could not have very easily reached the farthest end of his dominion so as to put all available national strength to a single purpose. If India had been a small country it would have been much more easy and with the modern means of communication I am sure it would have succeeded.

It has been a special feature of India that she has to contain in her life all the most diverse elements and assimilate them. This renders her problem most intricate.

Disciple: If it is India's destiny to assimilate all the conflicting elements, is it possible to assimilate the Mahomedan element also?

Sri Aurobindo: Why not? India has assimilated elements from the Greeks, the Persians and other nations. But she assimilates only when her Central Truth is recognised by the other party, and even while assimilating she does it in such a way that the elements

absorbed are no longer recognisable as foreign but become part of herself. For instance, we took from the Greek architecture, from the Persian painting, etc.

The assimilation of the Mahomedan culture also was done in the mind to a great extent and it would have perhaps gone further. But in order that the process may be complete it is necessary that a change in the Mahomedan mentality should come. The conflict is in the outer life and unless the Mahomedans learn tolerance I do not think the assimilation is possible.

The Hindu is ready to tolerate. He is open to new ideas and his culture has got a wonderful capacity for assimilation, but always provided that her Central Truth is recognised.

Disciple: Did India have the national idea in the modern sense ?

Sri Aurobindo: The nation idea India never had. By that I mean the political idea of the nation. It is a modern growth. But we *had* in India the cultural and spiritual idea of the nation.

Disciple: Is it possible to continue the modern idea of the nation with the spontaneously growing institutions of the olden times?

Sri Aurobindo: The modern political consciousness of the national idea has come to Europe recently. It arose either by a slow growth as in England and Japan on account of their insular position more or less, or in response to outside pressure as with the French who got it after their conquest by the Britons. Practically, the French began to be a nation after the appearance of Joan of Arc. Up to that time England found always some allies among the French nobles. Italy got it not more than a century ago, and the Germans as late as the time of Bismarck.

This consciousness is more political than anything else and it aims at the organisation of the national forces for offence and defence. If you accept the idea of nations going on fighting and destroying for ever, then you have to give up the cultural and spiritual free growth of the nation and follow in the footsteps of

Eurpean nations.

Disciple: In America (U.S.A.) each state makes its own laws — there the central authority is not oppressive.

Disciple: But the state legislates about everything. America, in fact, is a country of laws and regulations and not free growth.

Sri Aurobindo: The present-day national spirit and the centralised mechanical organisation of the State are logical conclusions or consequences of 'nations' — of 'armed nations'; you feel more and more justified in centralising everything once you have begun.

But there is no reason to suppose that the present-day ideal of nationhood which is only aggressive and defensive would last for ever. If this state of affairs is to last for ever then you can give up all hope for humanity. Only a cataclysm, in that case, can save humanity.

Disciple: If the spirit of nationalism is given up by the European nations, what will they follow?

Sri Aurobindo: Do you want me to prophesy? But the modern tendency seems to be towards some kind of internationalism.

Disciple: What do you think of Tagore's idea of India becoming the meeting-ground of the West and the East?

Sri Aurobindo: What do you mean by the meeting of the West and the East? You mean like the meeting of the tiger and the lamb?

Disciple: Meeting like brothers and equals.

Disciple: Why meet in India? We can meet in London, as their brother! (*Laughter*)

Sri Aurobindo: We in India take time to assimilate and put into life this new national idea of the West. Other Asiatic nations like the Japanese and the Turks have been able to catch it. There is a great difference between the Indian and the Japanese mind. The Japanese have got the mental discipline and capacity to organise. We in India

have not that sort of ordered and practical mind. In Japan everyone lives for the Mikado and the Mikado is the symbol of the nation — he embodies the spirit of the nation. Everyone is prepared to die for him. This we could never have in India; Japan was more feudal in its past than any other Asiatic nation.

Disciple: Is there no similarity between the political institutions of the Middle Ages and the organisations of Chandragupta in India?

Sri Aurobindo: There is only a superficial resemblance. We had no feudalism as it was practised in Europe.

Disciple: Was there no penal system in ancient India?

Sri Aurobindo: There were no jails as we have them now.

Disciple: No jails!

Disciple: What will non-cooperators do?

Disciple: The laws of Manu — do they represent the ancient penal code of the past?

Sri Aurobindo: *Manusmriti* is a compilation made by the Brahmins and it is not very old. It was, I believe, somewhere about the first century that the laws were compiled. They must be embodying, of course, the former laws. There were punishments in those days, fines, corporeal punishments, mutilation and even capital punishment.

Disciple: If we had all these things, why have we Indians come to our present condition?

Sri Aurobindo: Present-day Indians have got nothing to boast of from their past. Indian culture today is in the most abject condition, like the fort of Gingee — one pillar standing here, and another ceiling there and some hall out of recognition somewhere!

ଓ

4 AUGUST 1926

Disciple: The word Dharma has come to mean religion, though the original sense is not that. It is the law of being — social or moral — which sustains the being. Is the old classification of men in four orders, according to the peculiar Dharma of each, tenable now? Can each human being have the characteristics of the four orders?

Sri Aurobindo: There is infinite possibility. So the potentiality of all the four castes is in every man, but that does not exist as a fact. No classification can be perfect so long as man is living in the mental consciousness. It is not possible to classify all natures into those four orders. So we have come to the present confusion because it is regulated by birth. Of course, there are tradition, training, culture and atmosphere too which tend to give their stamp to ones nature.

But then the economic classification set aside the one according to inherent inborn nature. Profession then became the mark of the caste. Now, even this has broken down, what continues as caste is meaningless. Many meaningless things continue in humanity.

Before Buddha there were Kshatriyas in Bengal. When Buddhism collapsed there remained two castes, Brahmins and Shudras, other castes rightly resented being called 'Shudras'. In ancient times the agriculturist, the trader and the craftsman were all Vaishyas.

Disciple: Nowadays there is the democratic ideal.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. In the democratic ideal all are inherently equal. Now they say we must give equal opportunity to all — that is possible. There was a hierarchy in India and in feudal Europe. But where is democracy even today? It is a name which simply covers up the inequalities. All human ideals move round in a vicious circle. First, a hierarchy starts the culture — the start, generally, is with knowledge and spiritual experience. Then the culture spreads down to the people and in so doing it depreciates.

Then a general levelling down takes place and there comes democracy. Then a hierarchy comes in and the circle starts again.

Disciple: But is there a goal for humanity?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, there is a goal, and humanity is not going towards it but round and round in a circle below, while the goal is high up.

Disciple: What can man do to get out of the circle?

Sri Aurobindo: To escape he must go beyond humanity. In the case of individuals, attempts up till now have succeeded. But no effort has succeeded in making it a part of the earth-nature.

ൟ

8 SEPTEMBER 1926

Disciple: What are the possibilities of industrialism in India?

Sri Aurobindo: About that you can say as much as I. What do you mean by 'industrialism'?

Disciple: I mean the system of large-scale production through big machines.

Sri Aurobindo: Big machines are bound to come. The poverty of the people can only be removed by large-scale production.

Disciple: The real question is: How to prevent life from being mechanised?

Sri Aurobindo: That is a different question. But big machinery does not necessarily imply all the evils of industrialism.

Disciple: Even in cottage-industries men are mechanised to a certain extent.

Disciple: Yes, but cottage-industries leave the social life intact.

Sri Aurobindo: Why should the present form of social life

remain intact? New forms of social organisation will rise with the advent of large-scale production. It is the tendency of Indians towards poverty which is really responsible for their cry against machinery.

Disciple: The problem is: How to introduce big machinery and yet avoid all the evils arising out of it?

Sri Aurobindo: The evils are bound to disappear. The different ideas and schemes suggested in Europe show that those people are trying to correct the defects. Unless one enters into industrialism how can the evils be overcome?

Disciple: Will India have to pass through all the evils of industrialism?

Sri Aurobindo: But why should India wait till other countries solve the problem, so that it may imitate them afterwards?

Disciple: How will India avoid the evils?

Sri Aurobindo: Let her first acquire wealth. Without wealth they cannot expect to make any progress.

ON NON-VIOLENCE

28 MARCH 1923

Disciple: There are some followers of the school of non-violence in Indian politics who want to prove that the Gita preaches non-violence. They depend on the Mahatma's interpretation of the Gita.

Sri Aurobindo: Non-violence is not in the Gita. If, as some people, including Gandhi, say the Gita signifies a spiritual war or battle only, then what of *aparihārye'rthe* and *hanyamāne śarīre* — inevitable circumstance and body being killed? What of the *shoka*, the sorrow, for those who are dead? To me such a reading seems the result of a defect in their mental attitude. They have not got the intellectual rectitude which can wait and calmly grasp the truth. Besides, there is no question of crying over dead sins if the Kauravas only symbolise the 'sins' — and these people may be assured that the sins killed by Arjuna have not really died!

ϒ

18 APRIL 1923

Disciple: Sometimes we had discussions about Ahimsa and I pointed out the sixth chapter of the *Essays on the Gita* to my friends of the Sabarmati Ashram at Ahmedabad and I found they could not reply to it.

Sri Aurobindo: I am not sure, but Gandhi's son who came here sent it to Gandhi who said he was unable to reply to it intellectually. Perhaps he could not make up his mind to accept the principle that an evil cannot be destroyed unless much that lives by the evil is destroyed.

They could not grasp the argument that the spiritual power of

Vasishtha was responsible for the destruction. The original story is that the divine Cow — *kāmadhenu* — did not want to go to Vishwamitra. Vishwamitra wanted to take it by force. But Vasishtha refused to resist. So the Cow asked him to allow her to resist Vishwamitra. Vasishtha said: "You can do whatever you like." She called upon the psychical powers to resist and the Asuras came on account of the spiritual power of Vasishtha. Because one saves himself from the act of killing, his responsibility is not less on that account. The question is whether one resists or not. If one resists it may be by physical force or soul force — that is quite another matter.

Disciple: Did you read Malavia's speech about the Multan riots and also what Rajagopalachari has said?

Sri Aurobindo: I am sorry they are making a fetish of this Hindu-Muslim unity. It is no use ignoring facts; some day the Hindus may have to fight the Muslims and they must prepare for it. Hindu-Muslim unity should not mean the subjection of the Hindus. Every time the mildness of the Hindu has given way. The best solution would be to allow the Hindus to organise themselves and the Hindu-Muslim unity would take care of itself, it would automatically solve the problem. Otherwise, we are lulled into a false sense of satisfaction that we have solved a difficult problem, when in fact we have only shelved it.

Disciple: We had a funny argument about language the other day in course of which Upen Banerji said that Sanskrit was derived from Bengali! (*Laughter*)

Disciple: He could not have seriously meant it. He must have meant it as a joke. Probably he wanted to impress all — particularly the non-Bengalis. But the strange thing is that someone has recently made an effort to prove that Sanskrit is derived from Tamil! (*Laughter*)

Disciple: Everyone can say something absurd because no one is

there to put in a word for Sanskrit.

Sri Aurobindo (*turning to a disciple*)**:** Why don't you try to prove that Sanskrit was derived from Gujarati?

Disciple: Yes, my friend always puts forth the fact that Krishna lived in Gujarat.

Sri Aurobindo: Then it proves that Gujarati was spoken by Krishna! (*Laughter*)

9

23 JULY 1923

Disciple: The Mahatma believes that non-violence purifies the man who practises it.

Sri Aurobindo: I believe Gandhi does not know what actually happens to the man's nature when he takes to non-violence. He thinks that men get purified by it. But when men suffer, or subject themselves to voluntary suffering, what happens is that their vital being gets strengthened. These movements affect the vital being only and not any other part. Now, when you cannot oppose the force that oppresses, you say that you will suffer. That suffering is vital and it gives strength. When the man who has thus suffered gets power he becomes a worse oppressor. That is what I have written in the *Essays on the Gita* that when a nation gets freedom by the suffering of its leaders and other men, it oppresses other nations in its turn. It is almost always the case with those who suppress their vital being. It allows the pressure on itself, gets strong and then finds vent in some other direction. The same thing happened to the Puritans in England. Cromwell and his men came to power and became the worst oppressors. In Christianity the principle of non-violence is there but it is meant to be practised for religious and spiritual development. It may be partial but it can certainly develop

certain types of spiritual temperaments. What one *can* do is to transform the spirit of violence. But in this practice of Satyagraha it is not transformed. When you insist on such a one-sided principle what happens is that cant, hypocrisy and dishonesty get in and there is no purification at all. Purification can come by the transformation of the impulse of violence, as I said. In that respect the old system in India was much better. The man who had the fighting spirit became the Kshatriya and then the fighting spirit was raised above the ordinary vital influence. The attempt was to spiritualise it. It succeeded in doing what passive resistance cannot and will not achieve. The Kshatriya was the man who would not allow any oppression, who would fight it out and he was the man who would not oppress anybody. That was the ideal.

Disciple: Those who take to non-violence as a religion cannot intellectually conceive the possibility of transforming the spirit of violence.

Sri Aurobindo: But you can't get rid of the spirit of fighting like that.

Disdple: There is also the question of Hindu-Muslim unity which the non-violence school is trying to solve on the basis of their theory.

Sri Aurobindo: You can live amicably with a religion whose principle is toleration. But how is it possible to live peacefully with a religion whose principle is "I will not tolerate you"? How are you going to have unity with these people? Certainly, Hindu-Muslim unity cannot be arrived at on the basis that the Muslims will go on converting Hindus while the Hindus shall not convert any Mahomedan.

Disciple: There was only recently the boycott of a drama in Andhra because some Hindu in the show was represented as marrying a Muslim lady!

Sri Aurobindo: You can't build unity on such a basis. Perhaps,

the only way of making the Mahomedans harmless is to make them lose their fanatic faith in their religion.

Disciple: Can that be done by education?

Sri Aurobindo: Not by the kind of education they receive at Aligarh but by a more liberalising education. The Turks, for instance, are not fanatical because they have more liberal ideas. Even when they fight it is not so much for Islam as for right and liberty.

It was the Mahomedans and the Christians who began the religious wars, i.e., fighting for religion. First the Jews began persecuting and then the Christians, when they began to disagree among themselves, began to persecute also.

Disciple: The Mahomedan religion was born under such circumstances that the followers never forgot the origin.

Sri Aurobindo: That was the result of the passive resistance which they practised. They went on suffering till they got strong enough and, when they got power, they began to persecute others with a vengeance.

The Roman government persecuted the Christians and the Christians suffered. When the Christians came to power they started inquisitions and they always said that institutions like the inquisition were very good for the souls of those people. (*Laughter*)

Disciple: The Satyagrahi only cares about remaining non-violent himself.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, but when you become non-violent why do you allow another to exercise violence on you?

Disciple: But his position is that he does not care to remove violence from others; he wants to observe non-violence himself.

Sri Aurobindo: That is one of the violences of the Satyagrahi that he does not care for the pressure which he brings on others. It is not non-violence — it is not Ahimsa. True Ahimsa is a state of

mind and does not consist in physical or external action or in avoidance of action. Any pressure in the inner being is a breach of Ahimsa.

For instance, when Gandhi fasted in the Ahmedabad mill-hands' strike to settle the question between mill-owners and workers, there was a kind of violence towards others. The mill-owners did not want to be responsible for his death and so they gave way, without, of course, being convinced of his position. It is a kind of violence on them. But as soon as they found the situation normal they reverted to their old ideas. The same thing happened in South Africa. He got some concessions there by passive resistance and when he came back to India it became worse than before.

Disciple: He always calls it soul-force.

Sri Aurobindo: Really speaking it is a kind of moral force or, if you like, will-force that is ethical in its nature. You can say that in a certain sense all force is ultimately soul-force. But real soul-force is something different.

Disciple: What about Prahlad? He succeeded because of soul-force.

Sri Aurobindo: I do not know; for that you must ask Prahlad.

Disciple: But the Mahatma says that Prahlad used soul-force and he derives his Satyagraha from him.

Sri Aurobindo: First of all, Prahlad was a child. Then, his father was the king. There was the natural love for the father — very strong at that time in the society. But you must also remember that the whole thing resulted in tearing out the entrails of his father. (*Laughter*)

Disciple: Sri Krishna and Arjuna can serve as examples of men who resorted to what the Mahatma calls 'violence'.

Disciple: But Mahatma says, "I am not Krishna."

Sri Aurobindo: Anyone can say, "I am not Prahlad."

Disciple: People have funny ideas about consistency in political opinions. If one takes up a certain political creed and then changes to another, it means one has no sincerity, they say. If you accept one creed you cannot give it up!

Sri Aurobindo: That is always the case with so many people; they take the idea as fixed. There is no movement of the pure mind. They want to take things as fixed. There is no elasticity in their mental formations, and that is why they are so dogmatic.

ଓ

26 JULY 1923

Disciple: I had a long discussion with X on vegetarian and non-vegetarian diet. His argument was that those who take non-vegetarian diet are people devoid of pity. Life is sacred and no one who has realised the Spirit in all forms of life, has the right to take meat.

My reply was: Many Mahomedans and Christians who take non-vegetarian diet are not devoid of pity. Christ himself was not a vegetarian; diet has little to do with pity or cruelty. Secondly, the Jains, who are proverbially vegetarians, are not less cruel. Your argument that vegetables being lower forms of life can be eaten but animals being higher forms should not be eaten is based upon an arbitrary assumption about the higher and the lower forms of life. It is a creation of human mind. All life is life.

Disciple: X would have taken fish if it had been a vegetable.

Sri Aurobindo: It is absurd to make food such an important thing in the spiritual life. It is a secondary matter whether one takes vegetarian or non-vegetarian diet, so far as the spiritual life is concerned. The real thing is equality or Samata. If that is there then it is immaterial whether one takes fish or vegetarian diet.

Philosophically, it is meaningless to say this has more life and that has less.

Disciple: But the animals have a more evolved life than the trees.

Sri Aurobindo: Not life but mind. Life is more manifest in the plant, in some respects, than even in man. Only, the mind is not evolved.

Disciple: The question is of vital repulsion. One can say he feels repulsion in killing an animal or he feels the animal nearer to him. But that would not prove that the plant when killed suffers less. It is only because man is not able to see the suffering of the plant that he feels the repulsion less, perhaps. All these things are due to Samskaras — previous impressions. The plain fact is that one cannot live unless he takes some kind of life. All these arguments are only intellect trying to justify old Samskaras.

Disciple: You spoke of Samata. Why should one establish equality in the Prana, the Vital, before one does it in the mind?

Sri Aurobindo: Why should he not, if he can? It is not that one has to wait and establish equality on all planes at once, at one time.

Disciple: Is it necessary to wait till the Yoga is perfect in order to take fish?

Sri Aurobindo: I do not understand why one should. Very few people realise the true meaning of Samata. By Samata, is meant a certain attitude of the whole being towards the world and its happenings. This world is full of so many things which are horrible and terrible. Samata means that one should be able to look at them from a certain poise without being perplexed or moved. It does not mean that one will go on killing others indiscriminately or out of a personal motive. That would be untruth. But it means that one must be able to look at things without being moved. What X calls 'pity' is something quite different from compassion and both are different from Samata which is an attitude of the whole being. Pity and

sentimentalism are results of nervous repulsion, some movement in the vital being. I myself, when I was young, could not read anything related to cruelty wihout feeling that repulsion and a feeling of hatred for those who practised it. I could not kill even a bug or a mosquito. This was not because I believed in Ahimsa but because I had a nervous repulsion. Later, even when I had no mental objection, I could not harm anything because the body rejected the act. When I was in jail I was subjected to all sorts of mental tortures for the first fifteen days. I had to look upon scenes of all kinds of suffering and then the nervous repulsion passed away.

Compassion is something different. It comes from Above. It is a state of sympathy for the suffering of man and the suffering that is on earth and there is an idea of helping it as far as one can, whenever one can in his own way. It is not like pity. It is like the Gods who look upon human suffering from above, unmoved. That compassion can also destroy and it destroys with compassion as Durga does the Rakshasas. There can be no pity there. Many times the Rakshasa may come and ask you to save him, he may even ask you to transform him — as some beings asked the Mother in her vision — by your spiritual power. If you try that, all the power goes to the Rakshasa and you may become powerless. When these vital beings incarnate in men then true compassion would not prevent you from killing them.

That the vegetable kingdom has got life is not something new to know, and it is not necessary to acquire Samata to take fish. I used to take it when I was a child and when I had no Samata. What is required is: one should have no repulsion. As a matter of fact I cannot take fish nowadays, but that means nothing. I give it to the cats all right.

When there is Samata then there comes *Samarasatva* — equal enjoyment, from everything one gets the *rasa* — essential delight, from every kind of food. Even the food that we call badly cooked

has a *rasa* of its own. But one can agree to a little bit of tact. It is no use casting fish in the face of a Jain or forcing smoke in the face of an orthodox Tamil Brahmin.

♈

10 MAY1924

Disciple: Did you read in the papers that Mahatmaji is thinking of retiring to his Ashram and there playing with children?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. It may be a correct intuition. But I cannot understand how his argument about Khaddar bringing Swaraj holds. He says that if he can universalise Khaddar he can also make all who use it resort to civil disobedience. I do not quite see how it follows; for, putting on Khaddar is harmless — except for the inconvenience in summer perhaps — but civil disobedience is not harmless. One who puts on Khaddar may not join civil disobedience.

Disciple: He has advised moderation in Vaikom Satyagraha perhaps because he feels humble.

Sri Aurobindo: But that kind of moderate tinge is not good. Humility in a leader like that is not always a great virtue, at any rate humility of this sort. It is one thing to know that you are the instrument of Fate or of some power, or of God. But you must know that you are there to lead and that people must do what you say.

I am afraid, the difficulty with him is that his vital being drags him into all sorts of activities and he begins to say: "You must do this, you must not do that." Then his mind comes in and says: "You may do what you like. I am nothing, you are free to do what you like." This kind of double movement renders the activity ineffective. If he had only worked with his vital drive, he could have achieved many things.

Disciple: If he restricts his work to his Ashram, even then "support of friends" would be necessary, as he says. It was with great difficulty, I learn, that his Wardha Ashram was able to make two ends meet. And the inmates could hardly get time for anything else.

Disciple: Then it is Parishram, toil, and not Ashram!

Sri Aurobindo: Why not Sashram!

Disciple: Romain Rolland has written a book on Mahatmaji.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, I have heard about it and seen it. These European writers and thinkers I have found airy, wandering in their thought. I found another error in his book which is common to all European thinkers: it is about the Indian Spirit.

He traces the influence from Buddha and Mahavira to Gandhi; and for the Europeans that is the whole of the Indian Spirit!

Disciple: I believe Tagore is partly responsible for that, as it is he who many times has insisted on the gospel of Buddha — whatever that may be, for various people have different ideas about it — as the only way for the salvation of humanity.

Sri Aurobindo: I think partly at least it is Tagore who has made the idea current on the Continent that Buddha is the beginning and the end of the Indian Spirit. Formerly, Rolland never thought about Asia; he was busy with his European unity and European culture etc. He does not appear to be such a great intellect as he is reputed to be. He is a very good writer, no doubt. But the ideas are not much above ordinary, average ideas.

17 MAY 1924

Disciple: Did you see the papers today? Mahatmaji proposes to move a resolution against the boycott of empire goods.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, the line of argument is strangely inconsistent: in one breath it is "impossible and unethical" and then "useless and against non-cooperation". His argument is: You can't do without British books and medicines and so you can't do without anything British! He forgets that British trade does not depend on books and medicines only. Then, again, he says that European firms and the Government will go on buying British goods and thus the Boycott is futile. So, if some men go on ordering foreign goods, you must also order foreign goods! Very strange!

ϑ

20 MAY 1924

Elections to the French Chamber of Deputies are going on. Mons. Valiant of Karikal saw Sri Aurobindo in connection with the elections. Certain instructions and advice were given to him.

The Tarakeshwar temple Satyagraha came in for discussion. Sri Aurobindo seemed anxious to know the details. The report was that Abhayanand was the Mahant's man and hirelings had been engaged to beat the volunteers of Swami Satchidananda and Vishwananda. Satchidananda was saved from being killed by the Gurkha, the watchman, of a Marwari Dharmasala. Sri Aurobindo was not only interested but anxious that the fight must go through to success.

Mahatmaji's silent day and the conclusion of his talk with the Swarajists came up. He wants the Swarajists to take up the constructive programme in the councils — e.g., Khaddar and

prohibition; in case of failure in getting them through, to resort to civil disobedience.

Sri Aurobindo: But in that case again there may be another Chauri Chora!

Disciple: He also spoke at Bombay on the anniversary of Gautama Buddha and said Buddhism was not given sufficient trial.

Sri Aurobindo: Christianity and Buddhism, I am afraid, will ever remain without being given a trial. They make such a demand on human nature that it cannot be fulfilled so long as man is what he is.

Disciple: I get puzzled by Mahatmaji's logic, or shall I say, by his want of logic. At one time he says: "You must not fast against your enemy because by that you do violence to him. But you can fast when you have a grievance, or a cause, against your father." Then in the Vaikom Satyagraha when the people began to fast he said: "Why do you fast? The king is your father, why do you injure his feelings?"

Sri Aurobindo: I have no quarrel with what he says, so long as he says: "Do this" or "Do that." That is quite all right; but why does he give reasons?

☿

2 JUNE 1924

Disciple: Did you see Mahatmaji's statement about Hindu-Muslim unity?

Sri Aurobindo: I did not go through the whole thing — it was very long — but there is a compromise about non-violence. He says one can give it up in the case of robbers, looters and foreign invasion. He is also wonder-struck that his interpretation of the Gita is seriously questioned by a Shastri. I am rather wonder-struck at

his claim to an infallible interpretation of the Gita.

Disciple: He has criticised the Arya Samaj also.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, he has criticised Dayananda Saraswati who has, according to him, abolished image-worship and set up the idolatry of the Vedas. He forgets, I am afraid, that he is doing the same in economics by his Charkha and Khaddar, and, if one may add, by his idolatry of non-violence in religion and philosophy.

In that way everyone has established idol-worship. He has criticised the Arya Samaj but why not criticise Mahomedanism? His statement is adulatory of the Koran and of Christianity which is idolatry of the Bible, Christ and the Cross. Man is hardly able to do without externals and only a few will go to the kernel.

About conversion also you "do not merely change compartments", as he says, but you change the environment. All are not going to practise the central core of spirituality. Very few can do that, but from the externals some can come to the internal.

Disciple: There is also the proposal to meet the Mahomedans with bare breast and with a smile on the face!

♍

6 OCTOBER 1925

The talk turned to the Andamans, the punishment of prisoners and jail discipline.

Sri Aurobindo: Was passive resistance by X effective in the Andamans?

Disciple: We were the first to resort to it and it had some effect because, I think, it was new there. Then batch after batch tried it but without much result.

Sri Aurobindo: Were they organised?

Disciple: Oh yes!

Sri Aurobindo: What were the demands?

Disciple: The status of political prisoners, better food, ventilation, clothing.

Sri Aurobindo: That is the difficulty. This kind of passive resistance fails to bring pressure upon the other party after some time. At the most it may make your opponent morally uncomfortable, — that too if he has a certain kind of temperament.

Disciple: It was fun and a tragedy to see X flouting every item of jail discipline! He went on hunger-strike first, then remained naked and refused to go to the weighing balance. The jail staff used to put him in a gunny bag and weigh — even then the bag used to jump! (*Laughter*)

It was with great difficulty that he was persuaded to take food. His health is completely ruined!

ON SADHANA

9 APRIL 1923

Disciple: Can one practise the Supramental Yoga while remaining in the ordinary life?

Sri Aurobindo: It is true that the Supramental Yoga accepts life but that does not mean life as it is at present, because the Supramental wants perfection and at present life is not perfect. Many fields of life are at present dominated by Ignorance. We want to change the whole mould of life. We want to gain the Supramental state in human evolution as the next higher step from the Mind. Now that there are signs of its coming we must try to bring it down into the physical being. It is comparatively easy to ascend to the Supermind. But, then, those who go up generally go away from life.

Humanity is the only field of manifestation and all gains must be brought down to that plane, i.e., to the plane of the ordinary consciousness. In order to do that, the Truth and nothing else must be demanded, otherwise one gets something mental, emotional or vital and is satisfied with it. Till now, humanity has only got glimpses of the Truth, but not the Truth itself. Every spiritual movement has tended to do the same and has helped the realisation of it to a certain extent. The Vaishnavite religion wanted to bring the Truth into the vital and the aesthetic being and it remained satisfied with it. The Vaishnavites indulged themselves, you may say, spiritually, and the austerity of the effort was lost. The Vedic Rishis had the conception of the Truth but in the prevailing conditions it could not be brought down for humanity. The Upanishads have got the conception of the Truth but it is only a statement of it and there is no idea of bringing it down. Mainly, theirs is the working of the intuitive mentality. Then came the

intellectual philosophies — which were only intellectual — and the Puranas followed.

If the Supramental is brought into the physical then it might tend to endure, because Matter, though limited, is the one thing certain on this plane. If a number of men can reach this condition, then in course of time it may become a permanent force in mankind. It would certainly bring new forces into play in the universe and change the present balance of universal forces.

There may be many things beyond the Supermind but they cannot operate in this manifestation except through the Supermind. Therefore it must be made a permanent part of humanity.

♓

13 APRIL 1923

Disciple: Yesterday we had a talk about Sj. Lele and his Gurubhai Narayan Swami, and I told you that I came to know that they follow — I do not know how far it is true, though — the Dattatreya Yoga. I wonder what that Yoga is like.

Sri Aurobindo: I was thinking about it after the talk. You know there is, perhaps, a traditional method of Yoga in Maharashtra which belongs to the Dattatreya cult. The truth behind it is that Dattatreya represents the highest realisation — he always keeps his consciousness immersed in the Infinite and the freedom of the Infinite is brought down by him to the mental, vital and even to the physical plane. Therefore a man who is a Siddha of the path acts free like the Infinite even in his Prakriti and therefore may often act in a way which is considered immoral by society. He tries to bring down the power of the free Infinite into the instruments of manifestation and this he considers perfection. But it is doubtful whether it is perfection.

The danger of the realisation of the Infinite, free from all bondage, is that except in the highest condition, many false experiences can also masquerade as true. For instance, such a man gets tremendous power and generally has an ego-centric nature. Even Ravana was a great yogi. One having a great control over the vital plane only is generally known as a Rakshasa. The Asura controls his mind and his vital being. There is a great possibility of committing a blunder in the Dattatreya path.

Disciple: In the *Avadhuta Gita*, attributed to Dattatreya, great stress is laid on Vairagya, renunciation of the world. It teaches the abandonment of the world and nature.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, but that does not seem to be the whole of the Yoga of Dattatreya. It seems only one side of it. There is the other side — the side that accepts every determination of the Infinite free from all relations or relativities. There is unbridled pleasure or enjoyment on the one hand, there is renunciation of pleasure on the other.

Disciple: There are some people who claim to have met Dattatreya.

Sri Aurobindo: Lele also told me that he saw Dattatreya in the form of a boy at Girnar and talked to him for one hour.

Disciple: Lele gave you the Yoga — then did he not give the Dattatreya Yoga?

Sri Aurobindo: I did not begin with Lele. I first began on my own with Pranayama, drawing the breath into my head. This gave me good health, lightness and an increased power of thinking. Side by side certain experiences also came. But not many nor important ones. I began to see things in the subtle.

Then I had to give it up when I took to politics. I wanted to resume my Sadhana but did not know how to begin again. I wanted spiritual experience and political action together. I would not take up a method that required me to give up action and life.

When I came to Baroda from the Surat Congress, Barin had written to me that he knew a certain yogi to whom he would introduce me at Baroda. Barin sent a wire to Lele from Baroda and he came. At that time I was staying at Khasirao Jadhav's house. We went to Sardar Majumdar's place. On the top floor in a room we were shut up for three days. He asked me to do nothing but throw away all thoughts that came to my mind. In three days I did it. We sat in meditation together, I realised the Silent Brahman Consciousness. I began to think from above the brain and have done so ever since. Sometimes at night the Power would come and I would receive it and also the thoughts it brought and in the morning I would put down the whole thing word by word on paper.

In that very silence, in that thought-free condition, we went to Bombay. There I had to give a lecture at the National Union. So, I asked him what I should do. He asked me to pray. But I was absorbed in the Silent Brahman and so I told him I was not in a mood to pray. Then he said he and some others would pray and I should simply go to the meeting and make Namaskar to the audience as Narayana, the all-pervading Divine, and then a voice would speak through me. I did exactly as he told me. On my way to the meeting somebody gave me a newspaper to read. There was some headline there which caught my eye and left an impression. When I rose to address the meeting the idea flashed across my mind and then all of a sudden something spoke out. That was my second experience from Lele. It also shows that he had the power to give yogic experience to others.

When I was in Bombay, from the balcony of a friend's house, I saw the whole busy movements of Bombay city as a picture in a cinema show — all unreal, shadowy. That was a Vedantic experience. Ever since I have maintained that peace of mind, never losing it even in the midst of difficulties. All the speeches that I delivered on my way to Calcutta from Bombay were of the same

nature — with some mixture of mental work in some parts. Before parting I told Lele: "Now that we shall not be together I should like you to give me instructions about Sadhana." In the meantime I told him of a Mantra that had arisen in my heart. He was giving me instructions when he suddenly stopped and asked me if I could rely absolutely on Him who had given me the Mantra. I said I could always do it. Then Lele said there was no need of instructions. We had then no talk till we reached our destination. Some months later, he came to Calcutta. He asked me if I meditated in the morning and in the evening. I said, "No." Then he thought that some devil had taken possession of me and he began to give me instructions. I did not insult him but I did not act upon his advice. I had received the command from within that a human Guru was not necessary for me. As to meditation, I was not prepared to tell him that I was meditating practically the whole day.

All that I wrote in the *Bande Mataram* and in the *Karmayogin* was from that state. I have since trusted the inner guidance even when I thought it was leading me astray. The *Arya* and the subsequent writings did not come from the brain. It was, of course, the same Power working. Now I do not use that method. I developed it to perfection and then abandoned it.

29 MAY 1923

Sri Aurobindo (*to a disciple*)**:** Really speaking only two things matter: one, the Spirit that is dynamic above, and the other the Life here which is the field of expression of the Spirit. Mind, emotion and other psychological activities are only intermediate terms. Mind is more or less a channel and so is the heart. The body is merely the mould.

Two things are necessary in this Yoga: balance and a strong hold

on the earth. By balance I mean the different parts of the being adjusted to one another, or some steadiness, a quiet poise somewhere in the man, — not an unsteady inner condition.

A strong mental being is also very necessary. Otherwise, when the experiences come the man turns upside down. In India, our mental development — I mean the outer man's development — is not at all proportionate. There is the psychic being ready in many cases, there is the aspiration for spiritual life and faith also. But reason, intelligence — the dynamic mind — are very crude. That is why I hesitate sometimes to give the Yoga.

In Europe the outer parts are very well developed — reason, expression, the dynamic mind, etc. But then there the whole thing ends. There is a great poverty in the inner being. Some of the Europeans are, really, babies in spiritual life.

To combine the inner development with the outer would be ideal. Science, for instance, steadies reason and gives a firm grounding to the physical mind. Art — I mean the appreciation of beauty pure and simple, without the sensual grasping at the object — trains up the aesthetic side of the mind. The true artist has always the pure love of beauty — free and impersonal. Philosophy cultivates the pure thinking power. And politics and such other departments of mental work train up the dynamic mind. All these should be duly trained with the full knowledge that they have their limited utility. Philosophy tends to become mere mental gymnastics and preference for one's own ideas and mental constructions. So also Reason becomes the tyrant and denies anything further. But if the training is given to these parts with an understanding of their limitations, then they may serve very usefully the object of this Yoga. As I say, they must all admit a higher working in them.

A disciple related the yogic experience of a student.

Sri Aurobindo: It is no use hurrying about psychic experiences

and realisations. One must prepare the physical mind, the intelligence by common knowledge as well as knowledge pertaining to Yoga. One must understand what comes to him. Sometimes one does not even know what has come to him. One must also pay attention to Shuddhi, purification, by introspection, by Karma Yoga and by Bhakti. Then a step forward can be taken.

The question was raised about the Guru giving spiritual experience to disciples.

Sri Aurobindo: It only means that the readiness was already there and the Guru's help removes the obstacle and the natural development comes about. But no one can permanently change the consciousness.

Disciple: The difficulty with our people is that they seek the easy path and are easily satisfied; they do not want to face an uphill task.

Sri Aurobindo: In the first place, they get easily satisfied. But the permanent change of consciousness is the one thing important. And our people do not want to take pains. Moreover, Yoga is regarded as the realm of the miraculous. Another thing is that they do not want to be harsh to themselves: they want the satisfaction of feeling, "I am all right."

X got this experience: the vision of the golden Mother over the head, and then the descent of a great calm. Then the next thing was to purify the whole being so that the experience might remain. But he could not do it and so he lost it. He got the experience and thought he had done everything! He could have asked: "What after all is this experience? What next?" These people get all sorts of experiences but when the question of permanent change of consciousness comes they are not able to take a firm step.

♎

11 NOVEMBER 1923

A telegram from a mentally deranged sadhak became the topic of this evening. The sadhak in question wanted to die. The suggestion of death, it was thought, was due to some hereditary poison in the blood. These kinds of poisons often attack the brain.

Sri Aurobindo: It is these people who also get a sense of sin and the tendency to repent and humble themselves before others. Also they have very big ideas about themselves. They think they are very important in the universal scheme.

(*After a pause*) This Yoga, to be done well, requires perfect balance. Therefore, those who have merely a general call for Yoga should not go in for this Yoga, because it opens a possibility for the Higher Consciousness to work as well as a possibility for the powers of the vital world to come and take possession. If a man has not got the perfect balance, it becomes easier for these powers to take possession. Sometimes the man who has no faith in things invisible is much better off than the man who has faith in them or the man who has a tendency towards occultism. He is generally free — comparatively free — from attacks from the subtle planes because he does not accept them and so is not open to them. While the man who believes in them gives them a chance. In this Yoga you must have a sane mind.

Disciple: The general idea is that unless one has got a screw loose in his brain one would not come for Yoga. (*Laughter*)

Sri Aurobindo: How do you mean? If a screw is loose then the machine is not doing its work at all!

Disciple: The idea seems to be: the more loose screws the better chance for Yoga. (*Laughter*)

Sri Aurobindo: You mean myself? (*Laughter*)

Disciple: I did not mean that. But does it mean that a sane man is more fit for Yoga?

Sri Aurobindo: A perfect Yoga requires perfect balance.

Disciple: I am afraid, the sane men generally are matter-of-fact.

Sri Aurobindo: Not necessarily. What do you mean by 'sane'?

Disciple: Sane does not mean dull.

Sri Aurobindo: Of course not; when I speak of want of balance in these people, I do not mean they are insane. It only means that their development is not proportionate, it is lopsided or there is a twist somewhere in the nature which prevents the harmonious development of all the parts.

(*A period of silence*)

That was the thing that saved me all through, I mean the perfect balance. First of all I believed that nothing was impossible, and at the same time I could question everything. If I had believed in everything that came I would have been like Bijoy Krishna Goswami.

Disciple: What is 'perfect balance'?

Sri Aurobindo: A perfect yogi can have strong imagination and equally strong reason. Imagination can believe in everything while reason works out the logical steps. Even in the case of scientists you find they have very strong imagination.

Disciple: It is not exactly imagination, perhaps.

Sri Aurobindo: Imagination is the power of conceiving things beyond the ordinary experience of life.

Disciple: Does it correspond to Truth? Or is there a higher faculty of which imagination is the representative in the mind?

Sri Aurobindo: It ultimately becomes 'inspiration' when it ascends higher. The purer it becomes the nearer it gets to Truth. For instance, in the case of poets, generally, it is the inspired imagination that works. What you meant to say about the scientist was perhaps 'intuition'.

(*After a pause*) The capital period of my intellectual development was when I could see clearly that what the intellect said may be correct and not correct, that what the intellect justifies is true and its opposite also is true. I never admitted a truth in the mind without simultaneously keeping it open to the contrary of it.

You see, Mind means infinite possibility. Reason or intelligence chooses one to the exclusion of all the other possibilities. And it is reason which gives value to one and selects it. What it selects is like a law of science; you accept it because it explains most of the phenomena. In the mind we accept one possibility and suppress the others and so we see the reasons for the view we hold and other reasons are suppressed. Or the intellect goes on in a futile round and justifies the choice which has already been made by some other part of the being. The intellect is merely selective. I felt it very clearly for a long time. And the first result was that the prestige of the intellect was gone. As you go higher up, a wider movement develops which reconciles all contraries. Then you see the forces that are behind mental ideas. Of course, it is no use telling this to the ordinary man as he would be in a most hopeless confusion if he saw everything as mere possibilities. For instance, you would be absolutely confounded if I placed before you all the possibilities.

Disciple: When all intellectual operations appear merely as dealing with possibilities then what is to be selected and how is one to act?

Sri Aurobindo: There is no need to be puzzled. Simply look at them, watch them, see what they are and what is behind them.

For instance, I can laugh at Shankara's Mayavada or Gandhi's views; but I can see the truth that is behind them both. I know the place they occupy in the play of world-forces; for, it really comes to that.

Disciple: Can want of balance be overcome?

Sri Aurobindo: Everything can be done. You can do it within

your limits; you can correct the exaggerations of the parts in you that are well-developed and develop those that are suppressed and bring about balance in your being.

♑

31 JANUARY 1924

Disciple: Has collective sadhana any advantage over individual sadhana?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, it has.

Disciple: Has it not disadvantages also?

Sri Aurobindo: It has some. It is an advantage to those who are less advanced and a disadvantage to those who are more advanced. Collective sadhana always requires somebody who can create the necessary atmosphere — not by anything else but his presence.

Disciple: How could the disadvantages be overcome and the burden on the leader or leaders lightened?

Sri Aurobindo: As I have just said, it requires somebody who can keep off certain forces and at the same time create an atmosphere by his presence. For instance, I meditate with you here but I do not come out with the same consciousness that I have when I am inside. The burden is not a question of any individual. No one can help it.

♒

26 FEBRUARY 1924

A question arose from Sri Aurobindo's remark about a new disciple some days back.

Sri Aurobindo: I do not know how far he would go in the Yoga but, apart from it, he has something large about him. If he takes up the Sadhana more intensely he may find many difficulties, especially in the vital being. Largeness is an asset as well as an obstacle. But if he can go through, the result would be richer and more ample in his case. He is not, like K, straight and limited.

Disciple: Suppose two men begin the practice of the Supramental Yoga and attain perfection in it, how can we say that one is richer than the other, since both have reached perfection? Both are incomparable; each is great in his own way.

Disciple: Perfection being given, I believe grades would still remain. You start with a certain fundamental stuff and you can ultimately count upon that only.

Disciple: It is something like this: We say everything at the end of Sadhana becomes gold. But you start with a certain amount of copper that will become gold. If you have more copper to start with you will get more gold. Is it not so?

Sri Aurobindo: Why can there not be a richer fulfilment? You seem to think the Supramental to be a magnificent monotony! Why should there not be degrees among the Yogis and Siddhas?

Disciple: I have put my difficulty about the two men starting together and reaching the end. In what sense can one be said to be superior to the other, or his sadhana richer than that of the other?

Sri Aurobindo: Why do you assume that all should be equal and that at no time one would be greater and richer than another? You must get rid of the democratic idea. There are degrees, ranges and heights in the Supermind and they may be more defined than those that you find in the mind.

Disciple: When the whole being is Supramentalised then how can any difference remain?

Sri Aurobindo: If you talk of the essential being, then there is no difference between you and a cat and the trees: the essential Self is

One.The difference exists in what one puts forth in Nature. In the Supramental also, that which is put forth through one nature need not be identical with what is put forth through another; and in that case you can say that one manifestation can be richer than another.

Disciple: I am afraid I am not giving the same meaning to "Supramentalisation". So, if you make the meaning clear I would be able to follow.

Sri Aurobindo: By Supramentalising is meant the process by which one allows the Supramental to come and take hold of the several parts of the being; complete Supramentalisation takes place when the Supramental takes hold of all the parts down to the physical body.

Disciple: I also attach the same meaning to the term.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, but you confuse 'height' with 'richness'. Two persons may be on the same plane and yet one may be richer than the other.

Disciple: I grant that one may go faster; but suppose you and I start together, then there must be no difference between us at the end!

Disciple: That is to say, if he reaches the goal first and gets hold of the Supermind — because he is faster — then you will come up and participate in the bundle? It would be Supramental Bolshevism!

Sri Aurobindo: No, it is not exactly like that; when you come to the goal I am already gone a stage higher up, you see.

Disciple: But what happens when you attain perfection?

Sri Aurobindo: But what do you mean by 'perfection'? Perfection is a relative term. What is the Supramental state? It is also relative, it is not absolute.

Disciple: In that way one can say that every man has got infinite possibilities in him, and so all men are equal.

Sri Aurobindo: Every man has infinite possibilities in him but

what reason is there to suppose that two men at a certain time must manifest, or actualise, the same possibility? You can say that everyone has infinite possibilities realisable in an eternity of time.

Disciple: Yes. That eternity is a terrible affair! We are talking of things today, and possibilities in this life and it is true they can't be the same for two persons.

Disciple: I grant that there may be a difference in the types of nature, or manifestation, but one can't say that one is richer than the other. We may at the most say that they can't be compared.

Sri Aurobindo: Why do you say that the difference can be of type only and not of degree? Take the case of mental perfection, — though that is also imperfect and only relative, — say myself and B. C. Pal. Both of us began under similar circumstances and got into the same kind of work and lived at the same time. He has remained stationary in his mental growth — he has ceased to grow. He has developed more power to speak — I mean he may have been a better speaker than myself, and in such one or two directions he developed more, but in general intellectual development I have cultivated my intellect in many directions and have a richer development in my mind. The same can be said of the Supramental perfection.

Disciple: I may illustrate the difference in types by taking Tagore and J. C. Bose — both of them are intellectuals.

Sri Aurobindo: In the case of Tagore and Bose, on the whole you can say that Tagore has got a richer development than Bose. He is a greater personality also.

Disciple: What would be the final development of Supermind being brought down to the physical consciousness? In what respect would it differ from *icchā mṛtyu* — death at one's will — mentioned in the ancient books?

Sri Aurobindo: What is really understood as *icchā mṛtyu* can hardly be called the conquest of death.

Disciple: Generally, when yogis know that the time for death is nearing, they draw up the Prana and prepare to die.

Sri Aurobindo: There is a process by which the Prana is drawn up into the *brahmarandhra* and then the man departs leaving the body. What is wanted is immunity from all sorts of diseases which are the agents of death. One must have the capacity to leave the body when one likes: that is, not be compelled to leave it by any external force. There are other kinds of pressures, for instance, the psychic pressure, which may demand withdrawal from the body. In any case one must be able to leave the body like a clothing.

♎

16 OCTOBER 1925

A disciple's friend who had taken Yoga from some Guru came and wished to take up Sri Aurobindo's Yoga. He was told that this was not his path.

Disciple: I told him to seek out his old Guru again and stick to him. But he likes an 'educated' and a 'good-looking' Guru! (*Laughter*)

Sri Aurobindo: He told me during our talk that he was 'weak'. So I told him he must become strong. If he is unwilling to sit down at his task, that means he does not want it.

I am afraid he would not stick to anybody. And then he has got this 'educated' stupidity about his Guru! What people understand by education is some kind of ideas or thoughts and restlessness without any fixity of aim. He can take yoga from Tagore if he wants a good-looking Guru! The whole thing is that he is not prepared to take trouble.

Disciple: His idea of a *mahāpuruṣa* — is that he can make small men do what they cannot do by themselves alone.

Sri Aurobindo: Do you mean to say that the *mahāpuruṣa* can aspire on his behalf, and also sit down to do the Yoga for him? I do not know how this idea about miraculous change by Yoga has come to India. All along the Indian idea is that Yoga is done by *abhyāsa* and *tapasyā* and not by miracles. Some say that the new idea came from the Vaishnava religion laying stress on consecration and complete surrender. Some of the followers of Ramanujacharya think that as he had done the Sadhana his followers have not got to do it! How is that possible?

Disciple: But if that can't be done, then where is the good of being a *mahāpuruṣa*? Where does he stand? (Laughter)

Sri Aurobindo: He stands on the ground and on his own legs! All that he can do is to show the path; he can give the experience and then the man must work it out by himself.

Disciple: This idea of 'spirituality' has come from surrender.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, but no one can do the surrender for another man; each must make his own surrender. And surrender is not easy. If one can surrender unconditionally and *sarva bhāvena* — in all the parts of the being, as the Gita says — then there is nothing more to be done. But can a man do it? You can't do it by merely saying, "I surrender." It must become real; that is Sadhana.

Disciple: But then would the idea of surrender to the Guru alone be sufficient?

Sri Aurobindo: What do you mean by it? Do you think it so easy to surrender? It is very difficult, it is Sadhana itself.

Disciple: But supposing a man surrenders to a human Guru, would it be sufficient?

Sri Aurobindo: What do you mean by surrender to a human being? And sufficient for what?

Disciple: Sufficient for attaining Perfection or God.

Sri Aurobindo: I suppose surrender to a man means surrender

to the Divine in him, and whether it would be sufficient or not depends upon the man to whom he surrenders.

Disciple: Is it the same thing as surrendering to God?

Sri Aurobindo: I suppose when a man surrenders himself to another man, he surrenders to the Truth in the man. In what other sense can one understand it? He can, of course, get whatever the Guru has got if he is sincere and if he has a still greater sincerity for the search he may become even greater than his Guru.

The disciples then began to recount about various Gurus. The question raised was: "Should the *mahāpuruṣa* call himself God?" The difference between Rukmini's and Radha's surrender was also discussed. Rukmini laid down conditions in her surrender while Radha surrendered unconditionally.

Disciple: I now remember how Girish Chandra Ghosh, some days before his death, said that though Ramakrishna had asked him to leave the burden of his Sadhana to him, yet Girish found he had not been able to transfer his burden to Ramakrishna.

Sri Aurobindo: But the idea in India is that Yoga is a work of *abhyāsa* — constant practice. How can one man do Sadhana for another? Whatever may be the idea in other yogas, in our Yoga, at any rate, to leave the burden to the Guru would defeat its own aim. Each must work out his way by himself. What the Guru can do at the most is that he can put the Power. But the rejection and the transformation are to be done by the sadhak himself. He can get the help when he needs. And when the Guru can put the Power one may not be able to hold it, or one may even spend it away uselessly. Everyone has to work out his way.

A suggestion was made to the newcomer to stick to his Vaishnava Guru from whom he had got the temporary experience of peace. His objections to the Guru were: 1. That he was a Vaishnava. 2. That

he did not generally speak and explain. 3. That he was not impressive-looking. This was reported to Sri Aurobindo.

Sri Aurobindo: All these, if they are true, instead of being disqualifications are, on the contrary, recommendations! The fact that he can give experience in silence is a sign of a great yogi. That he does not speak except when necessary is also a good sign. He may be a Vaishnava or a Shaiva, that matters very little; that is religion. But this man does not want any religion from him — he wants spiritual development. What has that to do with religion ?

And about impressive appearance, most of the people who have it, get it from the vital world and turn out to be deceptive.

≈

2 MARCH 1926

Today Sri Aurobindo was not in a mood to talk. He turned to X and said: "If you want to talk you must put forward some subject. I am devoid of all talk today."

Disciple: In this Yoga what is the part of the sadhak and how far does it depend upon God and how far upon the Guru?

Sri Aurobindo: O Lord! That is too big a question. Do you want a mathematical reply or what?

Disciple: I don't want mathematics; I have already calculated.

Sri Aurobindo: What is the result? Have you found a formula?

Disciple: Not one, but many.

Sri Aurobindo: In this Yoga if you do everything yourself you make a mess; and yet at every moment you have to give consent to the higher movement, reject the lower and so far you have got to act. If you do not act properly then also you make a mess.

Even when you see the Higher Force coming down you have to

receive it properly. When the Higher Force is present you have to see that you use it in the proper way without twisting or distorting it. When the Higher Force is absent, you have to act yourself and take the consequences. You can't say that God must do everything. God does not do everything that way.

Then there is the Guru. What do you mean by the Guru? If you mean myself, I may, for the sake of convenience, consent to be called the Guru, but there is no Guru in this Yoga as people ordinarily understand the term. It is the Higher Force that is coming down. Generally, whenever any such Higher Force comes down it prepares an instrument who discovers the Truth — but really speaking, to whom it is revealed, and it manifests itself in him in proportion to his power of receptivity; there, too, the power is given to him. When the Power that is coming down prepares one such instrument it becomes easy for it to come down into others who want to manifest it, who do not want to go their own way but want to have and live the Truth. Then there is the chance of success. (*Pointing to himself*) Here is the instrument. Whenever there is the human instrument it becomes easy for the Higher Truth to manifest itself in life. If you prefer to call it a 'dynamo' you can say so. Even then everyone has to do his own work.

In this Yoga, at any rate, you can't say that "the Guru will do everything", and leave the whole burden to him. I do not know about other Yogas; but this Yoga means growing conscious every moment of what is going on in oneself. One has to give consent to the higher working, rejecting the lower movement. That is the basis.

The conditions for receiving the Guru's help are the same as those for receiving the help of the Higher Power directly. Unless you consent to his working, even God does not help man. In this Yoga there is that perfect liberty to the individual to make his choice.

Disciple: Do we get the help through you or directly?

Sri Aurobindo: In both ways. As the Force is coming down you get it as anybody else can get it. You also get it from me. It is the same Truth. It is something beyond Mind that is coming down. If you turn to me for help you get it from me. Something from me goes to you and sets up the necessary conditions so that the Higher Force can come down into you. In fact, the two movements are not so separate as you take them to be.

Disciple: In Tirupati's case what happened?

Sri Aurobindo: I had to tell him clearly: "If you want to do what you like and then want the Guru to help you I can't do it." In his case there were two things wrong: he had certain experiences and he began to indulge himself in them, to take the Bhoga of the experiences. He felt the exhilaration and the sense of power. When for two or three days he went without food with that weak body of his, people used to wonder. But it was all due to the vital force, and he entirely precipitated himself into the vital.

The second thing was that he did not want the Truth for its own sake but he wanted it so that he might become something great and unique — he wanted the Truth for himself — he wanted to become divine and used to tell me that he had already got half the Supermind. I was trying to push him into the physical consciousness. Unfortunately his psychic being had no hold over his other parts.

Disciple: Could the force that he pulled down — whatever its nature — have been warded off or kept away from him?

Sri Aurobindo: Not unless he would consent to it himself. God himself cannot help you unless you want to be helped.

Disciple: Was the tendency to twist the Truth, this want of sincerity, in him from the very beginning?

Sri Aurobindo: The seed of it must have been there. Such a seed can be either destroyed or developed. If you reject it, then it can be destroyed; if you develop it, then it can become strong and grow.

Disciple: Had he no sincerity when he began the Yoga?

Sri Aurobindo: There was sincerity in him, otherwise he could not have got into the Yoga at all; but when the other thing rises up it may cloud the whole being and overcome the sincerity.

Disciple: But when the attack is coming on him, can you not save him?

Sri Aurobindo: I cannot be holding him tight like that all along. If I attend to him like that then the moment I let go the hold and attend to someone else the difficulty will get into him again.

Disciple: Can you not change him without his consent?

Sri Aurobindo: No. It cannot be done without his consent. Even God himself cannot and does not do like that, and He is much more powerful than I am. Nothing can be done without the consent of the individual. I asked him not to pull the Higher Power. He used to say "Yes, Yes", but he never stopped. At last he came to such a condition that he could no longer listen to me. He used to say that what he had got was the Supermind! When I told him it was not the Supermind, he would again say "Yes", but go on in his own way. His only salvation was in his coming to the physical mind and behaving like an ordinary man.

Disciple: Can you not make him feel that he is not sincere?

Sri Aurobindo: No. He does not want to know; I can give him the experience of what is the true state but it is for him to reject the lower and consent to the higher working. I can't be all along holding him. That is to say, that part of the being which has consented to the lower play must withdraw, recoil from it; that is the condition for getting rid of the obstacle.

It comes to this: In this Yoga one can never be forced into the Truth. One has to consent to the Truth at every step.

Disciple: Do you think that the same is true in other yogas also?

Sri Aurobindo: I do not know. But I think some kind of consent

somewhere in the being, veiled or unveiled, is absolutely necessary for the working of the power of the Guru. But the exterior does not matter. The real thing required is the central sincerity.

Disciple: Suppose there is the central consent.

Sri Aurobindo: What do you mean by the central consent?

Disciple: I mean by it the consent of the psychic being.

Sri Aurobindo: The psychic being is behind the mental, vital, etc., while what I call the 'Central Being' is generally something above the whole being which presses on the nature and gets the thing done. It is that which drives the man to Yoga. All the rest is merely an excuse — circumstances, intellectual ideas and such other things are mere excuses. In my own case I started with the idea of freeing India and when I entered deep into Yoga, I found that something already had arisen and I went straight and all right; otherwise I would have deviated from the path.

In this Yoga it is not sufficient that the central being, which is generally above, should give the consent from a distance, but, when necessary, it must be able to come forward and make itself felt upon other parts. It is that which usually saves. For instance, doubt may arise a hundred times in the being and for a while, it may seem to carry you away completely; even then it is the central being which asserts: "I know the Truth, I can wait for it."

Disciple: What is central sincerity?

Sri Aurobindo: It is a very big question. You can say it is something in the central being which keeps to the call. There may be deviations from the path and also faults but if the central being is there the man comes back to the path. To have that central sincerity is the necessary condition for getting the Truth.

Disciple: Is it the case with all kinds of powers?

Sri Aurobindo: It depends upon what kind of power you are getting — there are so many kinds of powers.

Disciple: "Dodging and distorting" by the vital being seem to be the common malady. But it is very difficult to set it right.

Disciple: Is there no such dodging and distorting in the mental being also?

Sri Aurobindo: There is, and it may also divert the sadhak from the right path. But even the mind has after all some aspiration for the light and it is comparatively easy to enlighten it. The whole real danger comes from the vital being; it is there that the sadhak deviates. It may happen that one can't do the Yoga because of some physical obscurity rising up, but if one has done the work up to the vital then there is no chance of deviation. If one foils in the struggle in the physical, it is no real foiling; for, what is done will stand for the future. But if one deviates in the vital, then it is real deviation because it means defeat.

Generally such persons do not like the peace that descends. When X was here he felt that he was like an ordinary man, and he very much objected to that condition. When the Higher Force is present, there is a sense of power and delight and some people mistake it for their own power and when that Force is absent they feel like chaff and, really speaking, it is so. At that time the only thing one can do is to remain quiet and calm. It is the Force that has to work and not the man.

Disciple: What are the conditions for the Force to effect the transformation?

Sri Aurobindo: If the transformation gets done in me thoroughly, then it means it is easier for others; and if it founds itself successfully in others it means the necessary conditions are there for its continuance in the world.

Disciple: It means that time is required for it; it also means the Truth cannot manifest itself— as a universal factor — unless the universal conditions are ready.

Sri Aurobindo: Time in the universal sense. Everything may be

there and yet the environment may not be ready.

Disciple: Is it not very difficult to establish a sincere demand in the nervous and the physical being?

Sri Aurobindo: Generally the physical is not insincere. In fact, it is sincere, but very obscure, conservative, slow to change, it is inert and dull.

In the nervous being the return to Ignorance comes because of the memory of the past, or because of the physical being throwing up its impurities, or the vital being throwing its impurities upon it. Therefore, in dealing with the nervous impurities you have to see from where they come. If the vital being is sincere then the return in the nervous being comes from the physical being.

♓

9 APRIL 1926

The question of drinking and the use of narcotics by sadhaks cropped up today at the evening talk.

Disciple: Those sadhaks who drink, or take narcotics, do they get some help thereby in obtaining Samadhi?

Sri Aurobindo: All that depends upon what you call 'Samadhi'. My own experience in the matter is that wine and narcotics generally inhibit the action of the most Tamasic centres in the physical brain, and the other centres in the brain get stimulated. This helps one to escape from the limitations of the physical consciousness and one may get into other planes of consciousness.

Generally, sadhaks who live on mountains resort to these things to get warmth and get rid of cold. Others might resort to them to get away from the physical consciousness.

Disciple: Do they really get some help or merely imagine things

and make it an excuse for drinking and satisfying their desire?

Sri Aurobindo: Well, it is sufficiently well-known that drinking and use of narcotics generally enable people — whether sadhaks or not — to escape from the physical consciousness.

Disciple: Some people write their poems under the effect of narcotics.

Sri Aurobindo: One day Mother asked a workman why he was drinking. He said that after drinking he got thoughts which he could never get when he was sober. Coleridge wrote most of his poems when he was under the influence of opium. Somebody once praised a line of Tennyson. He said: "Ah! that line! It cost me 23 cigars!" So there is no reason to suppose why a sadhak should not derive help from it.

(*Then after a pause*) I hope you don't have serious intentions in asking these questions! (*Laughter*)

Disciple: I only want to know if they really get into Samadhi.

Sri Aurobindo: What do you mean by 'Samadhi'? If you mean an inward-drawn condition, certainly it may help one to get into it.

Disciple: Those who drink, generally, have got a light mood.

Sri Aurobindo: There are many moods: there is the light mood, the angry mood, the emotional mood — you would be a great Bhakta if you got into the last.

Disciple: Drinking had no effect on me: I simply used to get giddy.

Sri Aurobindo: That is the first stage.

Disciple: And then I used to go to sleep.

Sri Aurobindo: That is a kind of unconscious Samadhi. (*Laughter*)

It may help one to concentrate. But what one does with that concentration depends upon the man. My own idea is that of all

these people, who resort to these external stimulants, ninety percent never go beyond the vital consciousness. They get into it and then the vital is a great builder: it constructs any number of things, worlds, states, etc. It can give you an idea that you are in the Highest. There are any number of Siddhis on the vital plane and if you have proper knowledge you can get them by using these things. And even if one gets into the Brahmic consciousness it is not that one has got the Highest Truth, because the Brahmic consciousness can be had on any plane. You can have that consciousness on the mental or the vital plane.

These stimulants merely help you to get away from the physical. But what one does with that freedom depends upon the man. These are external means and therefore they have very bad reactions — they are not generally recommended in the spiritual life.

Disciple: There is a fear of Siddhis among spiritual aspirants and generally they are banned.

Sri Aurobindo: It must be due to the fact that once you get into the vital plane you find it very difficult to get to the Truth. The general idea is that for the experience of the Brahmic consciousness one must be always indrawn. But that is not quite true. I first had the silent Brahmic consciousness at Baroda as soon as I quieted my mind. It came, of course, to the mental being and I kept it for about a month. But I was not unconscious. I saw people and things as Maya — all things only small and the One, the Reality, behind them.

The experience of Shunyam is still more striking because you get into it by a sort of negation even of the Atman.

Disciple: What is that Shunya consciousness?

Sri Aurobindo: It is difficult to describe it exactly, because it i Shunyam, Void. A man may be passive, but then that experience of passivity is something positive. While Shunyam is Nothing. It is absence of anything: the great Asat — Non-being — from which all

things proceed — *asato sadajāyata*.

Disciple: Does it correspond to some Reality?

Sri Aurobindo: What is your test for Reality?

Disciple: Do they exist really, these states of experience?

Sri Aurobindo: Why not? If you ask whether they exist on the physical plane it is absurd, because by their very nature they are supraphysical. But they *are* real.

Disciple: What I mean is: Do these states of consciousness exist?

Sri Aurobindo: Of course. The truth is that the mental Purusha can take up any number of positions towards the ultimate Reality and in each position find a certain truth which is as absolute as the truths of the others. Each is thus complete, final. There is, for instance, a plane of Ananda which is self-existent; you remain in that state, you dont care whether the house is falling or your head is breaking, or what is happening to your friends.

ϑ

18 MAY 1926

A question was not taken up the other day. The disciple raised it again today: Is complete transformation possible without having a Shakti — a feminine counterpart in Sadhana?

Sri Aurobindo evidently was not prepared to say everything that was in his mind.

Sri Aurobindo: I don't understand why it should not be possible to bring about the transformation without a Shakti. Transformation would be complete if one can bring down the Higher Consciousness that you get in the mind and the vital being into the physical being and even into the very cells of the material body. The conditions of

complete transformation are that you should be able to keep the same deep peace, wideness, strength, purity, power and plasticity from the mind downward to the very material cells. That is the fundamental basis. This transformation does not require a Shakti.

Disciple: Perhaps he wants to say that this transformation is only possible in your case and in no other.

Sri Aurobindo: In that case, I would be in the very sorrowful plight of being the solitary transformed individual. I would be in the position of the Purusha in the beginning of creation when he found himself alone! (*Laughter*)

Disciple: When he found himself alone then he was in a hurry to create!

Disciple: What I wanted to say was not about doing Yoga or getting Knowledge or Power. I was asking about incarnating the Divine in the body.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. Incarnating the Divine means incarnating your own divine Self that is in the Supermind. It is something quite different from your present self, it is full of knowledge, power and Ananda of the Supramental plane; yet it is a Person — not merely an impersonal being. As I said, the conditions for that Being to come down and work here are that you must have the same deep peace, wideness, strength, plasticity, etc. even in your physical being. Transformation is a personal affair, I don't quite see what a Shakti has got to do with it.

You are mixing up things: 1. Transformation and the need of a Shakti. 2. You are mixing up myself and yourself!

Disciple: No, I didn't want to mix up myself with you.

Sri Aurobindo: I thought your question about Shakti was, perhaps, a distant preliminary to an application for marriage. (*Laughter*)

(*After a pause*) I do not object to a Shakti if there is a genuine case.

You can produce your Shakti, if there is one up your sleeve! (*Laughter*)

Disciple: He was thinking: "What is the good of transformation without a Shakti?"

Disciple: I have no personal concern in the question. I wanted to understand it and to have more knowledge.

Sri Aurobindo: I am not prepared to say everything on the question. I think I have already said something on some other occasion. The function of the Shakti is something quite different. In my own case it was a necessary condition for the work that I had to do. If I had to do my own transformation, or give a new Yoga, or a new ideal to a select few people who came in my personal contact, I could have done that without having any Shakti. But for the work that I had to do it was necessary that the two sides must come together. By the coming together of the Mother and myself certain conditions are created which make it easy for you to achieve the transformation. You can take advantage of those conditions.

But it is not necessary that everybody should have a Shakti. People have a passion for generalisation.

Disciple: I wanted to say that we are not as great as you.

Sri Aurobindo: It is not a question of great or small. It is a question of your being less complex than I am.

And before you can have a Shakti, you must first of all deserve a Shakti. The first condition is that you must be master of Kama.

Disciple: I know it as a condition.

Sri Aurobindo: That is not the only thing. There are so many other things; as I said I am not prepared to say everything on this matter. One thing is that both must come together and there must be complete union on every plane of consciousness.

Disciple: But if the Shakti is there then all these conditions would be fulfilled.

Sri Aurobindo: Do you think that because there is meeting between the two in the central being, or somewhere else, the whole thing is done? There are many personalities in man and in order to have complete perfection you must know the value of personality in the world. What is the true personality in you? There are various personalities on each plane and in the case of Purusha and Shakti they must all agree. It is a long and arduous Sadhana you have to undergo before such a complete union can take place.

But that has nothing to do with transformation.

Disciple: But at the rate at which we are progressing, if I multiply by the velocity the number of years, then I find very little chance of our being able to achieve it.

Sri Aurobindo: You are, now, in the condition in which you feel that the thing is impossible; you seem to be pessimistic.

Disciple: I was not always so.

Sri Aurobindo: I am not quite sure. You can't judge from the present-day speed what it would be next year. At present we are marching on foot, then after some time we may ride on the bicycle, then in the motor car.

Disciple: Then in the aeroplane.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, there was a time when I had to give up the idea of doing this work in my life-time. There was a great push in the vital being trying to do the thing very soon. Then I had to learn to give up all those ideas and leave it to God to do whatever He likes. The vital being is easily elated and the physical being is depressed. I too had periods of depression, but at no time I lost faith. I knew that the thing had to be done and would be done, but I did not know whether I would be able to do it in my life-time, or whether somebody else would do it. The periods of depression with me were never long. As a matter of fact, I find this year far better than all the past three years.

Disciple: 1. Does not the fulfilment of Sadhana mean that the power of the Higher Truth should be made dynamic and effective on the physical plane — even with regard to outside work?

2. If so, what are the general lines and forms of that work?

3. What is the precise nature of the role which we may have to play in it?

Sri Aurobindo: What makes you put these questions? There are two things: First is the constructive mind that wants to have some sort of image before it — of course, it wants mental lines and forms; secondly, it is the vital mind which wants to have a play.

It would be easy for me to reply to your question if you want to know whether it is our aim to have the Higher Power working in all the fields of life. I answer: "Yes, it *is* our aim to have the Higher Power which would be dynamic and effective in life." What again do you mean by external work?

Disciple: I did not include Sadhana and inner changes but the dealing with and acting in the outside life.

Sri Aurobindo: How do you fix the limit? Has not each work to do with the inside life also?

Disciple: Yes, but there is in each work an inner and outer co-efficient. I mean by external work that in which the co-efficient of the outer is greater than that of the inner.

Sri Aurobindo: Well, take the case of your cooking: would you call it external or internal work?

Disciple: I call it external work.

Sri Aurobindo: That means you have not yet established the right attitude towards it; otherwise it would be a part of your inner work as well.

Disciple: I do not exactly mean that it cannot be a part of internal work. I shall try to explain. Suppose the Supermind has come down and that we are all Supermen. We shall have to live an

external life, — we shall deal with each other, etc. What would be the difference between our dealing and that of an ordinary man?

Sri Aurobindo: You ask like Arjuna in the Gita: "How does the *sthitaprajña* walk? How does he speak?"

Disciple: I don't mean that; but what would be the fundamental difference between his external life and that of an ordinary man?

Sri Aurobindo: All fundamental change will be inner and not outer. That is to say, we shall have attained a higher consciousness and all we do will proceed from that consciousness.

But why this haste to know what would be the forms and lines of the Truth that has not yet come down into the physical? It is just the wrong way of proceeding. It would frustrate its own aim. Supposing you fix the form with your mind and say, "Such and such shall be the lines that the Higher Truth must take whatever it be." Now this form is your own mental construction, and whatever higher Truth comes down you will try to force it into that limited form.

As a matter of fact, the Truth that is coming down is not mental, it is an infinite Truth. The form it would take would be an organisation of that infinite Truth. But if you bind it down to a mental formula and say, for instance, that it should be democracy or communism or socialism or anything of that sort you naturally limit the Truth.

The one thing that Sadhana has done for me is that it has destroyed all 'isms' from my mind. If you had asked this question a few years back I would have told you, "it is spiritual communism" or, perhaps, "commerce, culture and commune" as the Chandernagore people say. At that time it was my mind that received the knowledge from Above and thought that the Higher Truth would take a particular form — the one that I suggested to Motilal Roy. Even at that time I was not quite sure that it was *the* form, — only I thought it was the proper form and I took it up as an

experiment.

But now if you ask me I would say, "Wait and let us have the Truth down here." Then it will not be the mind that will give form, the Supermind itself will create its own forms. It may be fluid and plastic and can be infinitely complex in its working out.

What we are doing at present is to make ourselves fit instruments for the Higher Tmth, so that when it comes down there will be the proper instrumentation for its working. We won't reject life; we have to bring a new consciousness into the external work. Supposing I am preparing fish for the cats. That is not my Supramental work. But as it happens to be there I do it, so as to be able to do anything that is needed in the proper way, without mistake. The tuning of the violin is not merely a physical but also a mental work — while this work is infinitely more complex. We have not to do our work mechanically, we have to become conscious of the forces that are at work and find out those that make for success and those that make for failure. We have to bring about the right movement.

Life has no 'isms' in it, Supermind also has no 'isms'. It is the mind that introduces all 'isms' and creates confusion. That is the difference between a man who lives and a thinker who can't. A leader who thinks too much and is busy with ideas, trying all the time to fit the realities of life to his ideas hardly succeeds. While the leader who is destined to succeed does not bother his head about ideas. He sees the forces at work and knows by intuition those that make for success. He also knows the right combination of forces and the right moment when he should act.

Not that such a man does not make a plan with his mind for himself and for others, but even after making his plan if he finds that the forces have changed he does not hesitate to turn round and adopt another course. Look at Indian politicians: all ideas, ideas — they are busy with ideas. Take the Hindu-Moslem problem. I don't know why our politicians accepted Gandhi's Khilafat agitation.

With the mentality of the ordinary Mahomedan it was bound to produce the reaction it has produced: You fed the force, it gathered power and began to make demands which the Hindu mentality had to rise up and reject. That does not require Supermind to find out, it requires common sense. Then, the Mahomedan reality and the Hindu reality began to break heads at Calcutta. The leaders are busy trying to square the realities with their mental ideas instead of facing them straight.

Disciple: Will India be free before the Supramental work begins?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, that India will be free, there is no doubt. Whether it will be by several peaceful stages or all on a sudden, that is the question. But that is the business of politicians, we need not have to bring down the Supermind for that. How it will be free is too big a thing to say. I am very much against a true politician giving out his plans to be torn and discussed by all people. He ought to keep things to himself.

So far as I am concerned I have got my work and I am satisfied with it. Not that I have no idea about the work that would be done when the Truth comes down. But immediately at present we have to bring down a change in the physical mind, the nervous being, and the vital mind, so that they may become fit instruments of the Truth. That is a big enough work, I should think. Not that the final goal is not known. But I always keep my mind open for any change that the Higher Truth may bring in it. I have got an idea but I don't want to shut out any new light that may come.

So long as you discuss mental ideas, it does not matter very much — I mean about the Yoga. There you can understand something and you have prepared yourself. But why should you want to know the practical side beforehand? In the first place, if I gave you some mental idea, you would grasp it mentally. There would be, first, the possibility of error in my idea. Then you would discuss it and create mental forms and you might commit worse

mistakes and then they would all be thrown about into the atmosphere and come in the way of its own fulfilment.

In these practical works there are not merely forces that help but also those that oppose. I don't want them to know beforehand what I am going to do. I don't believe, like Gandhi, that secrecy in these matters is a sin. You must find out what role you have to play.

Disciple: We must have knowledge of it.

Sri Aurobindo: The Higher Truth brings its own knowledge. It is not like the mind; the Truth that is coming down is knowledge.

(*Turning to the disciple*) You want to know what role you have to play, but how can I tell you now? I must know what is within you. You must find the true Person within yourself. First, when you have acquired the capacity to be a fit instrument of the Truth, then you will know what is intended of you. Then you find: "This is my work, and I have to do it in this way." At one time it was thought that the mind could grasp the whole Truth and solve all problems that face humanity. The mind had its full play and we find that it is not able to solve the problems. Now, we find that it is possible to go beyond mind and there is the Supermind which is the organisation of the Infinite consciousness. There you find the Truth of all that is in mind and life.

For instance, you find that Democracy, Socialism and Communism have each some truth behind it, but it is not the whole Truth. What you have to do is to find out the forces that are at work and understand what it is of which all these mental ideas and 'isms' are a mere indication. You have to know the mistakes which people commit in dealing with the truth of these forces and the truth that is behind the mistakes also. I am, at present, speaking against democracy. That does not mean that there is no truth behind it — and I know it, yet I speak against democracy, because that mentality is at present against the Truth that is trying to come down.

In order to get the true form — and if you want the unhampered

play of the Higher Truth — what you have to do is to be very open and ready for changing all your ideas, personal, social and national. Take taste and food: I was once a violent non-vegetarian, as X is at present a violent vegetarian. Then I found that it was my own vital being that was demanding meat. Well, I gave it up and for years together I went on taking whatever came my way. Then I found that even what people call 'tasteless' and 'bad' food has got a taste in it.

Disciple: Is it the experience of *sama rasa* — the essential delight — in everything?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, today I am a vegetarian and a non-vegetarian together and I know what people want to enjoy when they demand and insist on a certain kind of food. In order to arrive at that stage you have to give up your individual likes and dislikes — because that is a very limited condition — and enter into the universal consciousness and find what the cosmic spirit enjoys through each of these forms, what delight it derives from each.

Disciple: What relation will the Superman have with outside humanity?

Sri Aurobindo: You again come to the old question of humanity. I have nothing directly to do with it. If this Supramental Truth comes down then of course no problem remains because in the Supermind there are no problems — there is Truth. But it is not likely to happen that way, because that is not the way things are done in this universe. We can expect a small beginning. When the Highest Truth comes down in its full power then humanity may manifest even the perfection of the Divine in life in this world. But that is not yet.

ॐ

8 AUGUST 1926

Disciple: Is there life on the Moon? You said that the life-wave travels from planet to planet. Is this statement founded on experience?

Sri Aurobindo: No. I have no experience of other planets. I did not say, "the life-wave travels" — I only said it is mere reaction that may have travelled. You don't mean to say that the earth is the only planet with life and others are only lifeless ones?

Disciple: Conditions on the Moon and other planets for sustaining life are not conducive.

Sri Aurobindo: Why not? The same conditions may not be there. There can be other conditions and other forms!

Disciple: Uranus-Sirus is a double planet. The matter of one has fifty thousand times the density of water. We cannot form an idea of such matter, but it exists there in that form!

Sri Aurobindo: It is one of the stupid limitations of the human mind that nothing can exist which does not agree with its preconceived ideas of conditions. Fire-walking, it maintains, is impossible. Not only is it possible, it is done. It does not matter in what way.

Disciple: The question is whether time and space exist there also.

Sri Aurobindo: Whether they exist or not need not trouble you. I have written at enough length on it. Philosophy is the art of talking intelligently about things you know nothing about.

Disciple: Hegel says: 'Being' is nothing, 'becoming' is everything.

Sri Aurobindo: How does he know? All philosophy that is mental is of very little use.

Disciple: Anybody can prove anything.

Sri Aurobindo: That is why you have so many philosophies.

Disciple: Hegel says: Being is 'mere' existence.

Sri Aurobindo: Mere existence! What do you mean? If you had the experience of Being you would know it is not nothing. 'Mere' etymologically means 'pure'; Being is pure existence. Much of present day philosophy is only a play of words and ideas, it is mental gymnastics without any experience behind. In India there was always a connection between philosophy and knowledge. True knowledge cannot do without experience, as true science can't do without experiment. Indian philosophy is mental and intellectual but generally it takes its stand on some experience; for instance, the Upanishads.

ଣ

18 AUGUST 1926

Disciple: Is it possible to have some idea of the minimum requirement for being a Superman?

Sri Aurobindo: Is this not like an examination? It is rather a hard question to answer.

Disciple: Has anybody attained Supermanhood?

Sri Aurobindo: No. But one may say that it requires: 1. Complete opening from the highest mind to the most material part — all must open to the Truth — a sort of perfect square from top to bottom. 2. Raising the centre of consciousness into the plane of the Truth-Consciousness so that one is normally seated on the Supramental plane.

Disciple: All the time?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, all the time. The third thing needed is the establishment of harmony between, and organisation of, all the

movements of nature — mental, vital and physical — in the light of the Truth. All this not in this order, one after another, but at the same time.

Disciple: What are the gradations of the Supermind?

Sri Aurobindo: The gradations of the Supermind are four: *Saramā, Saraswatī, Iḷā, Dakṣiṇā.*

Disciple: When all the parts of the being are opened to the Truth, does the struggle with the hostile forces become more acute?

Sri Aurobindo: That depends on the work that is done before the opening; that is to say, one must have worked out to some extent the impurities in the nature before the opening. All this one must have done consciously.

Disciple: Has it to be done before the opening?

Sri Aurobindo: Why? Opening also means becoming conscious of the movement of nature.

Generally, one goes through the gradations of the Supermind. I have written about it in the *Arya.* There I was speaking not about the highest Supermind but about the highest Supermind "in the Mind". There is, for instance, the Intuitive Mentality. It is not Supermind but Mind. You can say it is Supermind working on the basis of Mind — by flashes. From the point of view of the highest Supermind, intuitions are 'glorious guesses'. Of course, the guesses may be quite correct.

The other three gradations are: the Representative, the Interpretative, the Imperative. As you go on developing, the higher and higher grades become active. The Intuitive Mentality is a kind of modified Supermind.

Disciple: What do you mean by 'modified' Supermind?

Sri Aurobindo: Supermind as it comes down modifies the mental movements and in turn gets modified itself also.

Disciple: What is *Agni*? What is *Kratu*?

Sri Aurobindo: *Agni* is the power behind all internal effort. *Kratu* is will and some other things also.

Disciple: You said yesterday that watches respond to mental thought and will. What did you exactly mean by it?

Sri Aurobindo: That they respond to your suggestion if you can make it in the right way.

Disciple: What kind of suggestion?

Sri Aurobindo: Of any kind. Only, it must be done in the proper way.

Disciple: What kind of response do the watches make?

Sri Aurobindo: Of course, they don't jump off the table if you want them to.

Disciple: Can they be made to go slower or faster?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. And they can be made to stop or start by suggestion.

Disciple: If a watch is out of order, will it start if I give the suggestion?

Sri Aurobindo: No, not if there is something wrong in the mechanism. There must be sufficient mechanical basis for the suggestion.

Disciple: Can fire be lighted by exertion of will-power?

Sri Aurobindo: That is a different thing.

Disciple: Will the trigger of a gun go off if I exert my will?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, if you have a will sufficiently strong for the purpose. It may take some time before the response comes.

Disciple: When there are many Supermen, what language will they use? Or would they use the same language and convey more meaning and force?

Sri Aurobindo: It is not necessary to be Supermen for that; poets

can do that without being Supermen.

Disciple: All our language is mental and it is said that at one time there was only one natural language.

Sri Aurobindo: Our language is not mental in its origin, it was only half-mental at the most. Man began to use language not so much to express ideas as to convey sensations and a certain sound was made to convey a certain sensation. The word employed was not so important as the sound itself and the different shades of it were conveyed by intonations of the same sound.

Disciple: It is said that in the beginning there was only one language.

Sri Aurobindo: It is likely. In the past, men used sounds to convey sensations and each word expressed many things. As mind developed, ideas began to be expressed and each word was bound down to convey only one meaning. This evolution of language is very clearly visible in the history of Sanskrit and at one time I proceeded far enough into the study of the subject.

Disciple: How can the general atmosphere of humanity affect the Sadhana of the individual or the group?

Sri Aurobindo: You see all sorts of things come to you from the universal; that is, from the general atmosphere of humanity — thoughts and ideas in the mind, impulses, etc. in the vital being and so on. It is for this reason that a sadhak has to isolate himself from the general atmosphere and create his own fort where these things cannot come in easily.

6 SEPTEMBER 1926

Disciple: What is the ideal relation of a disciple to his Guru?

Sri Aurobindo: Ask some other question! You must find it out within yourself.

Disciple: What should be the relation of the Guru to his disciple?

Sri Aurobindo: That I know. (*Laughter*)

Disciple: What should be the relation between the disciples themselves?

Sri Aurobindo: That you better ask K. He will be able to explain.

Disciple: How can there be a fixed relation by rule?

Sri Aurobindo: In these matters it is no good forming mental ideas and ideals and trying to cut the behaviour according to it. Again, it depends on the Guru.

Disciple: What I wanted to know was: Is there anything like Grace — what is called *ahaitukī kṛpā*?

Sri Aurobindo: You mean to say that the Guru would give everything whether the disciple deserved it or not? What do you mean by *ahaitukī kṛpā*?

Disciple: I do not know the exact meaning, but I believe it is what may be called Grace. Something from the Divine descending in man.

Sri Aurobindo: But Grace is also a part of divine Wisdom. You do not mean to say that divine Grace is due to a chance caprice of God? It is there because the Divine knows its purpose.

Disciple: *Ahaitukī bhakti* and *ahaitukī kṛpā* means that there is no motive — that is, human purpose or reason — which man can attribute to them. But there is always some other purpose which man may not be knowing.

Sri Aurobindo: That is a different matter; it may have no human purpose.

Disciple: Then is there nothing like the personal side of the Guru? I was all along thinking that there is the personal side as well as the impersonal side. Anyone who opens himself to the impersonal side of the Guru gets the Truth, but unless there is surrender to the personal it is not complete. This personal side of the Guru can use divine Grace.

Sri Aurobindo: It depends on the Guru. If he is a human Guru then his personal vital or mental preferences may play a part and often they falsify the purpose of Grace. The less they interfere the better. But what did you mean by the personal and the impersonal? Do you mean to say that if you gave me a lot of fruits and other things everyday there would be a lot of spiritual things going from me to you ? (*Laughter*)

Disciple: It will depend upon the object with which one gives the fruit, etc.

Disciple: It will be *ahaituka* fruit.

Disciple: Yes, *ahaituka* offering with an eye to *ahaitukī kṛpā*! (*Laughter*)

Disciple (*to Sri Aurobindo*)**:** But then, is there nothing like *patita-pāvana* **—** the Divine purifying the fallen and the low?

Sri Aurobindo: That is sentimentalism.

Disciple: It is specially the work of Grace to raise up the *adhama* **—** the low and the fallen.

Sri Aurobindo: That is to say, the Divine must neglect the *uttama*, and be partial to the *adhama*? (*Laughter*)

It is like the Christian idea that he who is favoured by God gets a flogging. The more a man is flogged the more favoured he is!

Disciple: Is there nothing, then, like personal grace?

Sri Aurobindo: As I said, it depends on the Guru. You don't mean to say that the personal side of the Guru decides voluntarily and independently of the Divine what is to be given to a disciple? Even when it appears to take that form it is something else that decides. The more the personal element (in the sense of the vital or mental preference on the part of the Guru) the more is the likelihood of mistake being committed. If he is a mere human Guru, then if he is a Bengali he would like to give his grace to Bengalis or he would choose his relatives. That has nothing to do with the divine Work. All that idea about *patita-pāvana* and adhama-uddhāra means only this that however bad or seemingly wicked the external life may be, the man can yet be saved if he has something in him which can receive the Truth. One may say that even for Grace to descend there are conditions.

Disciple: Are these conditions determined by the Divine?

Sri Aurobindo: If you take the stand that everything is decided by the Divine then we have nothing to do but to sit still. If you drive the matter to a mental logical extreme then you have to come to a dead stop. But, taking things as they are, man *has* his part to play.

Disciple: Is there anything like predestination, everything about a man being fixed by something divine?

Sri Aurobindo: No, as I said already, in these questions, so long as man is talking mentally, his words will hardly have any sense. For the thing that is decided, the decision is taken on so high a plane that for man to say that "All is decided" is rather too much.

Disciple: It is the Higher Power that does everything in our Yoga.

Sri Aurobindo: Even then your consent is necessary at every step.

Disciple: I suppose surrender is the chief condition?

Sri Aurobindo: It is one of the conditions. There is also the

power to receive the Force and many other things. It is not as simple as many people imagine — that the Guru gives and the disciple takes.

Disciple: Is it not true that of all the disciples of Ramakrishna, Vivekananda got the greatest benefit?

Disciple: You mean spiritual benefit?

Sri Aurobindo (*after a pause*)**:** Well, it is very doubtful; evidently he was the strongest of them all and so he manifested it most and put it forward in his expression. But that is not the measure of spirituality.

Disciple: For instance, a silent man like Brahmananda may have more of it than any other.

Sri Aurobindo: Many times outer success is not beneficial to a man's inner progress. Sometimes it may be better for a man's progress that he should fail than succeed.

Disciple: Why?

Sri Aurobindo: Because success may mean being led away from the path; of course, it depends upon what you mean by success. If you mean success in external life then it is a different matter. But if you mean "following the upward line of his evolution" then the so-called outward success may be harmful.

Disciple (*turning to another*)**:** Suppose you had become a minister — you might have been successful in the external sense, but what would have happened to your spiritual development?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, and our X would have been a big official somewhere and might have retired with a pension. (*Laughter*)

Disciple: And Y would have been a diabetic professor. (*Laughter*)

Disciple: Instead of a dyspeptic yogi.

Sri Aurobindo: And Z would have been a mammoth athlete like

Ramamurthy.

Disciple: Instead of a rheumatic sadhak.

Sri Aurobindo: Why, if I had followed the line of external success I would have been somewhere in Baroda! That life was easy.

Disciple: But what would have become of your energy?

Sri Aurobindo: Do you think I had then the same energy that I have got now?

Disciple: But the possibility and capacity must have been there.

Sri Aurobindo: It is like the seed of a tree. If it does not get the soil it may not grow. If I had stuck to my job I would have been a Principal, perhaps, written some poetry and lived in comfort like a bourgeois.

All the energy that I have I owe to Yoga. I was very incapable before. Even the energy that I put forth in politics came from Yoga.

Disciple: You said about the forces that control money that two conditions were necessary. First, one must be very calm and must not get disturbed and have no desire for money. Secondly, it requires a *bojhāpaḍā* — an understanding — with the universal forces. What is this understanding?

Sri Aurobindo: There are many ways. Even in the case of one man there are different methods, I mean in the yogic sense, which he can follow. First, you must put your need before God and ask Him to satisfy it; your duty ends there. In that case you need not have any *bojhāpaḍā* with the universal forces.

But we look upon money as a power of the Divine, and, as with everything else, we want to conquer it for the Divine in life. Hence, in our case an 'understanding' is necessary. As the money-power today is in the hands of the hostile forces, naturally, we have to fight them. Whenever they see that you are trying to oust them they will try to thwart your efforts. You have to bring a Higher Power

than these and put them down. First, they try to trick you by offering success, one can say, by trying to buy you up. If a man falls into that trap then his spiritual future is ruined.

You have really to follow a certain rhythm of the money-power, the rhythm that brings in and the one that throws out money. Money is given to you in the beginning; then, you have to deserve it. You have to prove that you do not waste it. If you waste it, then you lose your right to it.

Disciple: What is waste?

Sri Aurobindo: Waste is waste. Throwing away money without any order, unorganised expenses without regard to the means of getting money or to the utility of spending. It is not that you have to hoard money. It is there for being spent. But we must spend it in the right way — in a certain order and with an arrangement.

Sometimes the Divine even follows man's caprices, as is typified in the case of men like Thakur Dayananda.

Disciple: Yes. Whatever he gets must be spent away on that very day, that is the rule; and they all wait till they get their next days food.

Sri Aurobindo: The result is that sometimes for seven days they get so much food that they can't eat it and then for fifteen days they have to starve!

Disciple: Even the young children go without food for that period.

Sri Aurobindo: Well, that is a chaotic movement; but he follows it!

Disciple: Even the industrial magnates who get money get into that rhythm of which you spoke.

Sri Aurobindo: Of course, they do, otherwise they can't get rich. They take it in and then again they throw it out, then it returns and again it is thrown out. That is the reason why they get colossal

wealth. These rich people often have no attachment to money, it is the action of the vital force that they enjoy, not their money.

Disciple: It is a life-movement.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. That was the ideal of the Vaishya as opposed to the Bania. The Vaishya was the man who could get tremendous wealth and could spend it liberally, could establish the interchange and enter into the rhythm.

Disciple: But these Marwadis who are very rich are attached to their wealth.

Sri Aurobindo: No.

Disciple: No, they are not. We think them greedy because they don't give money in the way in which we want them to give. They generally spend it in the old conventional way. We think them greedy also because they are particular about small things in their business — caring for pies.

Sri Aurobindo: It is very necessary. It is exactly that which brings them the money.

Disciple: Henry Ford has also got that habit and so has become rich. He describes in his biography how he started with the idea not of making money but of giving people a quick conveyance at a small price.

Sri Aurobindo: The Americans have got the knack of getting into the rhythm which brings them money. The French method, for instance, does not succeed because they follow out small narrow paths, while the Americans boldly get into the movement on a large scale and money circulates and as it circulates it accumulates and increases life wherever it flows.

Disciple: You said that some men have got in their vital being a special capacity that draws money to them.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. Some have it. And some women also have got it. Women can give a tremendous push to a man in anything he

does. There are also women who are *lakṣmī-chāḍā* — those that take away what you may have.

ଣ

9 SEPTEMBER 1926

Disciple: Can the attack of the hostile forces be made use of by the sadhak for his progress?

Sri Aurobindo: What do you exactly mean?

Disciple: In our Yoga we have to discontinue the lower movement of nature as being an obstacle to Sadhana, but the Tantrics — specially the Vira sadhaks — turn these obstacles to account and, taking help from these, they build up spiritual life.

Sri Aurobindo: How?

Disciple: That is my question.

Sri Aurobindo: I have no objection to taking fish and even you can take wine, if it suits you, but how can the sexual act be made to help in spiritual life? In itself the sexual act is not bad as the moralists believe. It is a movement of nature which has its purpose and is neither good nor bad. But, from the yogic point of view, the sexual force is the greatest force in the world and if properly used helps to recreate and regenerate the being. But, if it is indulged in in the ordinary way, it is a great obstacle for two reasons. First, the sexual act involves a great loss of vital force, it is a movement towards death, though this is compensated by creation of new life. That it is a movement towards death is proved by the exhaustion felt after it; many people feel even a disgust.

Disciple: But statistics have been collected to show that married people live longer than bachelors.

Sri Aurobindo: That is a fallacy. Someone will say that he lived

a hundred years because he did not smoke and another will assert that he has lived up to that age with smoking.

The second reason is that the excitement accompanying the ordinary sexual act destroys the psychic possibilities of the man. He gets separated and dissociated from the higher centres of consciousness and goes downwards. People say that they take the attitude of Shakti taking Bhoga through them, but that is only a way of saying. People indulge in lower movements, yield to hostile forces and at the same time pass as yogis. Even the Vedantic attitude is often made an excuse for yielding to the hostile forces. "All this is Maya, illusion, there is no virtue, no sin, no good, no evil," they say and give themselves up to lower vital forces.

Disciple: But are the lower movements of nature themselves not hostile?

Sri Aurobindo: No, but they offer an opening to the hostile forces and the hostile forces use these lower movements for their own purposes.

Disciple: As regards the degrading effects of the sexual act, does marriage and legal sanction make any difference?

Sri Aurobindo: Absolutely none. These moral injunctions are for the maintenance of society, for the welfare of the children born; but so far as the yogic life is concerned the sexual act with ones own wife is as much harmful as that with any other woman. Only those who have risen above the human level, those who have a certain kind of spiritual force as well as vital force, can possibly make a proper use of the sexual act for a spiritual purpose. If sadhaks at a lower stage take to these things they are certain to fall.

Disciple: If the sexual act is so full of danger, why should it at all be used as a help? Why not confine oneself to a safer course?

Sri Aurobindo: That is a dangerous question to answer. I shall answer that question when you have risen above the human level.

Disciple: When one has reached that level beyond the human consciousness, how is the loss due to the sexual act averted? What happens to the excitement and dissociation from the higher centres of consciousness?

Sri Aurobindo: The Higher Power can take up these things in its own way and prevent the harmful effects. Then the method and the act become absolutely different from the human.

Disciple: My original question was whether the attack of the hostile forces can be utilised by the sadhak?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes; by conquering it. The sadhak acquires knowledge of the action of the hostile forces and of the defects in his own nature which invite the attack.

Disciple: Does he acquire anything more than the knowledge?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, new openings may occur to the Higher Power; his strength may increase and so forth.

Disciple: Can a hostile force be changed and transformed by conquest into something good and helpful?

Sri Aurobindo: A force of nature can be so transformed, but how can you change a hostile being or its force? Of course, the hostile beings have certain forces of nature in their clutches. If you conquer the hostile beings these forces of nature are liberated and help in fulfilling the Lila of God. Thus anger is a force of nature in the clutches of hostile powers. If it can be freed from their influence, it can be used for the divine purpose.

Disciple: How can anger act in the divine way?

Sri Aurobindo: God does not hesitate to strike or smite. He often behaves in a manner which to the ordinary mind may appear to be cruel. But the attitude is quite different. Thus, in the Vedas, the Panis steal the cows of Heaven — the Sun — and conceal them in the caves. When the Panis are conquered the cows are released and rise heavenward.

Disciple: So, can one say that the Higher Power sends hostile forces to the sadhak?

Sri Aurobindo: The hostile forces are there and the Higher Power may use them for its own purpose. Of course, everything comes from the Supreme Power, but that must not be understood in the crude way. The hostile power may be used to test the capacity of the sadhak.

Disciple: The Higher Power may, sometimes, appear to act as a hostile power as when by the descent of the Higher Power the sadhak breaks down.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, by the descent of the Higher Power the unfit Adhars break down, while the fit ones progress. There are certain risks but all great achievements involve dangers and risks. When one is not fit and prepared and constantly calls to God, "Come down, come down," then the Power may come down and the Adhar may collapse.

Disciple: Is the power of the hostile attack always proportional to the resisting power of the sadhak?

Sri Aurobindo: Not always; otherwise why so many failures and defeats? The Guru may fill the deficiency.

Disciple: At times does the Guru even ward off the attack without any effort on the part of the sadhak?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. There is no general rule; in some cases the Guru does the whole thing, sometimes the sadhak starts and the Guru helps — which means that the Higher Power helps and the Guru is made only an instrument.

10 SEPTEMBER 1926

Disciple: In the Tantra there seems to be symbolism. There are different Chakras which open one after another.

Sri Aurobindo: There is no fixed rule as to which opens first. The heart is the psychic centre and if that opens first, it is a very good opening.

Disciple: It is said that in the *Vāmana* incarnation, God in the form of the dwarf, demanded three steps from the Titan Bali. Does that signify that the three worlds — the physical, the vital and the mental — were in the Asuras possession and the Divine demanded that they should be liberated and become the dominions of God himself?

Sri Aurobindo: I suppose so; but as yet the liberation remains unaccomplished.

Disciple: When the mind is transformed by the action of the Higher Power what are the changes that take place in it?

Sri Aurobindo: Which part of the mind? The thinking mind?

Disciple: Yes.

Sri Aurobindo: The reasonings and the fanciful constructions of the mind cease; there remains only a play of intuitions.

Disciple: Does not reason remain at all?

Sri Aurobindo: When the whole mind is intuitivised, it knows direetly and therefore needs no reasoning. I see you before me; so, why should I argue whether you exist or not?

Disciple: Reason may not be required for acquiring the Truth, but, for the practical application of the Truth reasoning may be necessary.

Sri Aurobindo: Do you think that Truth is not practical? The Truth is not something abstract. As long as the mind reasons there is the possibility of error.

Disciple: As regards mental constructions, — are they always incorrect? May not they be inspired by the Truth?

Sri Aurobindo: Mind may build on its intuitions, but there is every likelihood of its committing mistakes. Mental transformation is a gradual process. First, the reasonings and constructions are silenced. Then the mind becomes intuitivised. Then one feels that there is something above which is much more than intuition. Intuition goes downwards and the Higher Truth takes the place of intuition. At present, you find it difficult to understand how all reasonings and constructions of the mind can cease. That can be understood when you know what is intuition.

Disciple: I understand that reasonings and constructions are obstacles to the coming of the Truth.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, if you go on eternally with them the Truth will not come.

Disciple: Then one must correct these things before the Higher Truth can come down.

Sri Aurobindo: *You* cannot do that; it is only the Truth which can change the nature and activities of the mind. You can only quiet them so that the Truth may come down and take up the transformation.

Disciple: If the mind is silenced, will the Truth come down?

Sri Aurobindo: If you do nothing else but merely silence the mind you will have a silent mind and nothing else.

Disciple: When a developed mind opens to the Truth and an underdeveloped mind opens to it which will be the richer of the two?

Sri Aurobindo: First you have to see whether the underdeveloped mind can open itself to the Higher Truth; generally it cannot. Then, it may have a narrow opening and the result will be limited. The Higher Truth may afterwards develop the mind but if

the mind is already developed, there is already a rich material upon which the Truth can work. But the too much developed mind is also an obstacle. It has its fixed habits, its fixed grooves to which it sticks tenaciously. With the coming down of the Truth the mind may suddenly develop new powers — painting, or poetry, etc.

Disciple: Would it not mean that the preparation for these faculties was done in a past life?

Sri Aurobindo: You do not mean to say that if a man begins to understand Chinese suddenly he was a Chinese in his past birth?

♍

20 SEPTEMBER 1926

Disciple: How is it that some unfit persons are drawn to this Yoga while some fit persons are not drawn to it?

Sri Aurobindo: What do you mean by being 'drawn'?

Disciple: I mean something in them pushes them to this Yoga and then it is found that they are unfit and they are pushed simply to be broken.

Sri Aurobindo: You mean to say that the man is pushed by something hostile into the Yoga and that there is nothing in him that wants it?

Disciple: Yes.

Sri Aurobindo: It can't be. Something in the man who takes the Yoga wants the Truth, but the other parts may not be able to follow it.

Disciple: That is to say, such persons are not fit for Yoga and yet they take to it and get broken.

Sri Aurobindo: What is 'fitness'?

Disciple: We mean an aspiration for the Truth and some strength in the vital being and a developed mind.

Sri Aurobindo: Well, a man may have all the necessary qualifications you speak of and may appear strong, and yet he may not be able to go through; while another man may appear weak and yet something behind intervenes and he is able to go through. So there is no mental rule in this matter.

Disciple: But if they are not fit what is it that pushes them into the Yoga?

Sri Aurobindo: As I say, something in them wants the Yoga and pushes them. In some cases it is destiny that pushes them.

Disciple: What is meant by 'destiny'?

Sri Aurobindo: Well, it is a general term to cover up anything inexplicable. (*Laughter*)

Disciple: Does it mean that the man is driven to the path because he is chosen?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, you can call it 'chosen' or 'accepted' or anything else you like; that won't help the matter.

Disciple: But many people think they are chosen but yet they don't succeed.

Sri Aurobindo: It is not a question of your 'thinking' that you are chosen. There are plenty of people who think that they are accepted — while as a matter of fact they are not. On the other hand, there are people who go on persisting in the belief that they are not accepted almost to the very end and then they find that they have succeeded.

Disciple: I was thinking of X — whether anything in him really wanted the Yoga.

Sri Aurobindo: How do you mean? He had at any rate something which wanted the Yoga, otherwise he would not have been pushed into it. But the arrogance of his mind and vital being

came in the way and he lost the chance.

Disciple: Take the case of others from X's district. How much they try and yet they do not make any headway and still they persist in pursuing what they call Sadhana. I wonder why they do it. And has their doing it any utility?

Sri Aurobindo: Evidently, because something in them wants the Yoga but the Adhar, the material instrumentation, is unfit. And about utility, how can you know the utility? Something is working and these are, as it were, materials in the boiling pot. Some get prepared, others don't. You can't wait and start the spiritual life after all the conditions are secure. And what is fitness?

Disciple: I don't know. I want you to tell me.

Sri Aurobindo: I have not come across anyone who has all the fitness required for this Yoga. What is your idea of fitness?

Disciple: We see some people who look to us 'fit' for this Yoga but they don't come to it while others who have nothing come to it and don't get anything.

Sri Aurobindo: And there are cases where what you call a strong man breaks down and the weak man somehow manages to go through.

Disciple: What are the conditions of success in this Yoga?

Sri Aurobindo: I have often told of them. Those go through who have the central sincerity. It does not mean that the sincerity is there in all the parts of the being. In that sense no one is entirely ready. But if the central sincerity is there it is possible to establish it in all the parts of the being.

The second thing necessary is a certain receptivity in the being, what we call the opening up of all the planes to the Higher Power.

The third thing required is the power of holding the higher Force, a certain *ghanattva* — mass — that can hold the Power when it comes down.

And about the thing that pushes there are two things that generally push: One is the Central Being. The other is destiny. If the Central Being wants to do something it pushes the man. Even when the man goes off the line he is pushed back again to the path. Of course, the Central Being may push through the mind or any other part of the being. Also, if the man is destined, he is pushed to the path either to go through or to get broken.

Disciple: There are some people who think they are destined or chosen and we see that they are not chosen.

Sri Aurobindo: Of course, plenty of people think that they are specially 'chosen' and that they are the first and the 'elect' and so on. All that is nothing.

Disciple: Then, can you say who is fit out of all those that have come?

Sri Aurobindo: It is very difficult to say. But this can be said that everyone of those who have come in has some chance to go through if he can hold on to it.

Disciple: There is also a chance of failure.

Sri Aurobindo: Of course, and besides, the whole universe is a play of forces and one can't always wait till all the conditions of success have been fulfilled. One has to take risks and take his chance.

Disciple: What is meant by 'chance'? Does it mean that it is only one possibility out of many others, or does it mean that one would be able to succeed in Yoga?

Sri Aurobindo: It means only that he can succeed if he takes his chance properly. For instance, X had his chance.

Disciple: Those who fall on the path or slip, do they go down in their evolution?

Sri Aurobindo: That depends. Ultimately, the Yoga may be lost to him.

Disciple: The Gita says *na hi kalyāṇakṛt* — nothing that is beneficial — comes to a bad end.

Sri Aurobindo: That is from another standpoint. You must note that the word *kalyāṇakṛt* is an important addition.

In the meantime Kiki, the cat, came and began to howl. Someone compared Kiki's voice to a violin.

Disciple: D writes in his book that the Japanese have given up their music which requires harmony and taken up European music and instruments. Is that true?

Sri Aurobindo: For that we must ask Pavitra here.

Disciple: I think Japanese instruments also are found in plenty. You also find European instruments, orchestra, etc. There are places where you find Japanese music and drama patronised and there are many who like them very much. They have also made improvements in their instruments to suit modern requirements. The talk turned to a Theosophical Lodge started by an European in Japan.

Sri Aurobindo: I don't think it came to much.

Disciple: Oh, it simply fell down after he left Japan. I was president of the Lodge for some time.

Disciple: How could it remain any longer when the head is here? (*Laughter*)

Sri Aurobindo: Probably even in that Lodge there were more foreigners than Japanese.

Disciple: There were only two Japanese, one Dutch, one Pole, and so on. The Japanese mind is not interested in these things — philosophy, metaphysics, etc.

26 SEPTEMBER 1926

Disciple: How can a man get things done for him by the Higher Power unless the Higher Power becomes known to him or is, at least, partly realised?

Sri Aurobindo: If it is known by the mind, then, like all mental realisations, it gets mixed up. Mind divides, infers, conceives and then lays down mental standards for the Divine. It dictates to God that He shall satisfy mental standards. Mind is not the entire consciousness, it is partial. Mind is, again, arrogant and believes that it is the highest instrument, the master or even king of the universe. It has the error of false knowledge, it is limited to partial light.

The vital mind is rampageous; it wants to do things, it is violent. It says: "Yes, I surrender, but I want God to do this." It does not say it does not want to surrender. The physical mind is obscure and dull. In the vital, almost unconsciously to oneself, one tries to make a show — there is a tendency to pretension.

In the ideal case one is ready to admit one's own defects and be on guard to watch with spiritual humility. But all these things make the Higher Power's working very difficult in the lower nature. Therefore we insist so much on sincerity in this Yoga. It is the psychic being which has no such pretensions because it knows and can surrender to the Divine. It is therefore that in our Yoga the awakening of the psychic being is so important. That alone gives one the psychic tact which steers clear of all difficulties.

Disciple: Can one allow the Higher Power to take charge of his Sadhana?

Sri Aurobindo: You can leave the building up of the Sadhana to the Higher Power.

2 OCTOBER 1926

Disciple: There is an article in the *Madras Mail* by Keynes in which the writer says that the attempt in modern times to establish government monopoly is not desirable and people do not know what really happens.

Sri Aurobindo: The writer is too busy looking at facts and so he does not see what is coming.

The struggle between Capital and Labour is there and Socialism and Collectivism or Communism had to be brought in to counteract the individualistic tendencies of the present-day civilisation. Assertion of the collective being is necessary for organisation and efficiency because the tendency of Capitalism was, and would be, to concentrate the power of money in the hands of the few. It is futile to expect the capitalists to move from philanthropic motives. Capitalism, Socialism, Communism have each a truth behind them. Formerly there were three parties viz. Capital, Labour and the Government. In some countries the governments have been largely influenced by capitalists. For instance, in England the Government acting as a third party has hardly remained neutral. It is clear from the coal-strike. It is really very difficult for any government to resist the power of money, except in a country like Russia which is based on revolutionary principles. Even there the Government has identified itself with Labour and, from all reliable reports, it has made the condition of the labourers much better, as far as could be done in a poor country like Russia. In Italy, Mussolini tried to establish the Government as a third party to control both Labour and Capital but even there Capital seems to have largely succeeded.

Disciple: You said yesterday that realisation of God is not sufficient to change human nature.

Disciple: The question arose from a conversation which we had about the Christian mystics. They have an idea that once they realise the Divine Consciousness there is nothing else to be done.

They also maintain that after that all the work a man does is not his but Gods.

Sri Aurobindo: How do they know? And what 'divine' work do they do?

Disciple: Generally, they were monks and so they used to do the work of the Church.

Sri Aurobindo: That is what I say, that even when one gets the experience of the Divine Consciousness once, one generally remains what he was in his mental and vital being. And so they go about with the usual ideas of the Church or religion in the orthodox sense, making themselves believe that it is the divine work.

It is another side of the Adwaitawadins who believe the world to be Maya. Once you get the realisation of the Brahman the rest does not matter — they don't mind what happens to the lower nature. If there are movements in the mental or the vital being, they are simply due to the past impulse, and you have nothing to do with them, they are outside you, they do not belong to you.

When I said that mere realisation of God is not sufficient I meant that such a realisation is not sufficient to bring about a permanent change of consciousness. It needs the working of the dynamic Power of God to change human nature.

Disciple: It so happens in their case because even the first glimpse of the Divine Consciousness is so overpowering, that it is too much for them! They are satisfied with the experience.

Sri Aurobindo: It is true that all Adhars have not got the capacity to hold the Divine Consciousness and they don't make any effort to increase the capacity of the natural instrument. Once you come down from the Divine Consciousness you are again like an ordinary man. One ought to go on increasing the capacities of his natural instruments in complexity and many-sidedness so as to hold the Divine when it comes down.

Disciple: They speak of Samadhi in which one enters into Turiya — the fourth state.

Disciple: I find it very difficut to enter into Turiya. Immediately I try, I go to sleep! (*Laughter*)

Sri Aurobindo: That means you don't go deep enough.

Disciple: What happens to their nature-part after their realisation of the Brahman?

Sri Aurobindo: They don't care about what happens to their nature-part. It is this idea of realisation that gave the belief that one who realises the Brahman acts like *bāla* (a child), *jaḍa* (inert), *unmatta* (a mad-man), or *piśāca* (one possessed by lower vital forces).

Disciple: It is very easy to become *jaḍavat.*

Sri Aurobindo: I don't think it is so easy. I think the only man who came very near to it was Jada Bharat, the sage.

Disciple: Even he burst out while carrying the king's palanquin, — the occasion was too tempting! (*Laughter*)

Disciple: But Shankara must have got into the Brahman.

Sri Aurobindo: You better ask the Brahman! It is a knotty question to answer. Perhaps Brahman would have said: "You are too argumentative to enter into me!" But it is like the hen and egg question.

Disciple: But according to the Adwaita philosophy, all is in the Brahman, or one can say, God is in everything.

Sri Aurobindo: That is a mental realisation and does not carry you much further.

Disciple: Can one say that the Truth-Consciousness is the same as the Jiva?

Sri Aurobindo: On its highest plane the Jiva is the true Divine Being. But it is on every plane. When you realise the Divine you know your true being and also you know God and His purpose in

your Jiva. One can get into contact with it through the central being.

Disciple: I wanted to understand how belief is known on the different levels — mental, vital, and physical.

Sri Aurobindo: I will say something about belief and then you try to understand it by what it is not. Mental faith believes in an idea. That is to say, mind believes in what it thinks. The vital believes in what it desires, and the physical believes in what it senses.

Disciple: Does the transformation come first or the realisation of the Divine Consciousness?

Sri Aurobindo: How can you have the transformation without the Higher Power?

Disciple: Is it a process that demands faith in all the parts of our nature?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. It demands a mental faith which is the anticipation of the knowledge that is coming. Vital faith anticipates the effectuation that is coming. Faith in the physical anticipates what is going to be realised.

Disciple: Is there a difference between effectuation and realisation?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, there *is* a difference. Effectuation is the work of force, realisation is a fact. This object lying here is a fact, it is not a force.

ON VEDIC INTERPRETATION

1923

Sri Aurobindo: The third and the fourth Mandalas contain many subtle suggestions about the symbolism of the Veda. The hymns of Dirghatamas in the first Mandala are clearly mystic. The experience of the Rishis is common in general principles but it varies in detail. These details are hard to fix because you do not find any parallel to them in other hymns. And so, sometimes you become helpless. The general idea of the functions of Agni is the same. He is *kavi-kratu*. — "one with a seer-will" or "one possessed of the seer-will". You have also to see the connection of Agni with Satya, the Truth. The good, *bhadram*, which Agni does is the increase in Truth. In the Brahmanas there are many hints that suggest the symbolism in the Veda. Yama, probably, is the Truth working on the physical aspect of the universe. The words *dhī*, *ṛtam*, *satyam*, *bṛhat* are among the important words for Vedic interpretation. *Trīṇi rocanā* when applied to *svar* refers to the three divisions of i. When it refers to three heavens, it means the heavens of the mental, vital and physical fulfilment. When each of these is fulfilled it is called 'heaven' and its fulfilment is by the highest Truth. Agni's own home — *svaṁ damam* — is the highest Truth. In V. 12 the Rishi does not want the mixture of Truth and falsehood but wants only the Truth. Agni's own home is full of joy: Ananda is the *pratiṣṭhā* — basis of the Divine Will.

In Mandala 1.95.1 there is mention of the 'child' that is One — that child is Agni. He is called "the son of two mothers" of different colours — of Day and Night, i.e., of Knowledge and Ignorance. *Svarthe* means "by the right path". *Anyānyā* "to each other" — alternately; *hari*, "hill of coloured light"; *svadhāvān* "having the law of its own being"; *śukra*, "white, shining white"; *suvarcas*, "full of bright light"; *daśa yuvatayaḥ* (1.95.2) "Ten young women bear the

child —*garbha* — by Twashtri."

दशेमं त्वष्टुर्जनयन्त गर्भमतन्द्रासो युवतयो विभृत्रम्।

8 JULY 1924

Sri Aurobindo: This idea of poverty was never the Hindu ideal, not even for the Brahmin. Gandhi has advised the non-co-operators not to bequeath their property to their sons. The idea is: why should you burden your son with a sinful load? This is an absurd ideal, at least it was never the Hindu ideal. He seems to imagine that everyone in India after forty-five used to leave his property and go away to the forest.

Disciple: But then what should the no-changer do with his property if he does not give it to his son?

Disciple: Give it to the Government.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, if there is nobody to inherit, then it must go to the Government.

Disciple: But the Government is already sufficiently Satanic and the sin of more property may make it more Satanic.

Sri Aurobindo: It is a Christian ideal to be poor.

Disciple: In the hymns recited as flower-offerings — *Puṣpāñjali*, they pray *Svasti svārājyam*, *bhojyam*, *sāmrājyam*, *pārameṣṭhyam* — for self-rule, and all rule of the Divine, and all enjoyment.

Sri Aurobindo: Why! you have to face property if it comes. There never was any preaching of poverty. Of course, there was Sannyasa having the ideal of 'no-property'. But that is quite a different thing from remaining poor.

What the Indian ideal is you read in the Ramayana where the civic life is described. There was no man who was poor in Dasharatha's kingdom, none who had no garden. That is the Indian

ideal and even in the Upanishads we see that the Brahmins had got wealth.

(*Sri Aurobindo recounted the story of Yajnavalkya who said he would bow down to the highest among the knowers of Brahman. He said: "I only want to take the cows"*)

Not to be attached to property was the idea, but it is quite a different thing from remaining poor.

Disciple: Did Buddhism preach poverty?

Sri Aurobindo: There was a division: the monks and the householders. The monks owned no property and for them there was the communal property. For the householders poverty was not regarded as an ideal. Our people never preached poverty.

Disciple: Even in the Taittiriya and other Upanishads we have *annavān annādo, mahān kirtyā, paśubhiḥ* — "The one who is possessed of Matter (of food) and gives Matter (food), great be his glory, with the wealth of cattle." Always the insistence is on earthly greatness and prosperity.

ॐ

4 JUNE 1926

Disciple: Some time back you said that the symbolism of the Vedas was to some extent conventional; for example, the cow as typifying "light of the Truth". The same may be said of Buddhist symbolism and that of ancient Egypt.

Is there not a symbolism which could be said to be universal, i.e., having a reality independent of the mental significance of words and images?

Sri Aurobindo: Have you any idea of such a symbolism?

Disciple: If at all such a symbolism exists it ought to be based on

true correspondence between the planes of consciousness, and the symbols themselves must be universal. The numbers are said to form such a symbolism; for, though mental, they have correspondence on each plane of being. For example, 2 corresponds to polarity — male and female, positive and negative, attraction and repulsion, good and evil, etc.; 4 corresponds to will and creative action; 7 is said to represent individual consciousness contacting the universe, unfolding its powers; 8 is related to Karma; 9 is related to life and cyclic evolution.

Has this idea of symbolism of numbers any true foundation? Or, in other words, do there exist realities which are true symbols? Numbers seem to have special properties seemingly self-existent, absolute and changeless, ruling the whole manifestation. Perhaps it is this that made Pythagoras and many other mystics see in numbers the highest abstract images of the laws of being?

Sri Aurobindo: What is your idea of the difference between the symbol and reality?

Disciple: A symbol is a significant form of a plane of being which presents to the human mind a reality belonging to another plane, e.g., the flag of a nation.

Sri Aurobindo: In a sense everything here, on this earth-plane, is symbolic of something that is beyond the physical plane. Our bodies, the vital being, the mental being are all symbols — there are a whole range of symbols.

There are authentic symbols like the Vedic 'cow' which means Light and the quadruped of that name. It was something precious to the Aryan people and it was taken away by the robbers. The Rishis gave life to this symbol; form was given by their mind, and it became an experience.

There are people who say cow should not mean Light. But what can "herds of the Sun" mean? It can only mean "Rays of solar light". There are certain life-symbols: e.g., 'Mountain' stands for

ascent, going high up. 'Bridge' or 'crossing of rivers' is also a symbol from life-surroundings.

Then there are certain symbols that have an inherent appositeness of their own; for instance, Akasha stands for the Eternal Brahman. In any culture, 'Sky' always indicates the Infinite. 'Sun' stands for the Supramental Light — it is the Sun of knowledge.

Then there are mental symbols; once fixed they become active on their own plane. OM, numbers, alphabets, geometrical figures have their own interpretations, e.g., the square always indicates to me the Supermind; it is a perfect shape.

Disciple: How did you know that the square is the symbol of the Supermind?

Sri Aurobindo: It might have been already found on the mental plane by somebody or might have come into my mind by some force. I did not pursue its meaning; it indicated to me the Supermind and I was satisfied.

A triangle on its base indicates the world formed by the three lower powers. A triangle placed on its apex indicates the three higher planes of being. When these two triangles are superimposed upon each other then a new symbol is found. The ancients indulged in such speculations.

It is also possible that the same reality may seek expression through different symbols, and if you go behind you find it is the same thing which is Infinite, and unlimited by the symbol.

Disciple: What do you think of the Tantric sounds Hring, Kling, etc.?

Sri Aurobindo: They are not mere sounds, there must be some force behind them. The same is true about Mantra Siddhi. Three states are represented by OM and they can act differently in different men.

Disciple: The numbers being universal, why can't they be universal symbols?

Sri Aurobindo: They are absolute to the human mind only; they are essential for our way of perceiving. There may be another plane of consciousness where they may not be so absolute, and where 1 may be at the same time 2.

Numbers are the way of perceiving certain unalterable facts on the physical plane. It means that the mind can cut up the Infinite, take one and one and one and then say about each: "This is one." Physically, there are certain unalterable laws, e.g., going through the door is not possible without opening it, but the possibility may exist elsewhere.

Disciple: In a new geometry there are different postulates and axioms — not the same that we find in ordinary geometry.

Disciple: Nowadays all can be included in geometry. There exist imaginary numbers; e.g., the square root of minus 1. It is an imaginary number which the mind cannot conceive and represent in some substance, but yet it indicates some reality.

Disciple: Are they not contradictory?

Disciple: Not at all; they are well calculated and very logical.

Sri Aurobindo: What is minus 1? It is a number which goes beyond our gamut like sound waves which we can't hear yet exist all the same. Our range deals with the positive numbers while the negative ones are contrary to it. It does not mean they don't exist. They can even make themselves known to the mind.

(*To a disciple*) Do you feel that you are one being? And yet are you quite sure that there is no other personality in you? So you feel you are one body but at the same time multiple personalities are there in you. There are positive personalities in you, but there may be negative personalities also! You have then a negative number! There is an interpenetration of one by another and a sort of fluidity

which makes this possible. But if it were so on the physical plane then one could not deal with physical realities.

ON EDUCATION

MAY 1923

Sri Aurobindo: Does anyone know anything about the Montessori method of child-education?

Disciple: The principle is to base education round the spontaneous activities of the child, i.e., primarily, round its sense-activities which have to be intelligently guided by the teacher. In fact, the child learns, the teacher does not teach in the old sense. Group-life furnishes occasions to inculcate social virtues in the child's mind. Freedom of the child is the cornerstone of her system. The training centres round child-life by guided activities of the senses, i.e., the nervous system.

Sri Aurobindo: The principle is all right. There are, I believe, three things: To bring out the real man is the first business of education. In the present system it is sorely neglected. It can be done by promoting powers of observation, memory, reasoning, etc. Through these the man within must be touched and brought out.

The second thing that acts is the personality of the teacher. Whatever Montessori may say, the teacher is there and his influence *is* there and it does, and must act. The teacher may not directly guide or instruct but the influence keeps the children engaged. Children are quite open to such an influence.

The third thing is to place a man in the right place in the world.

Disciple: She has also provided for silence in her teaching. There is no religious teaching. There are people who object to this method saying that the child must be brought in contact with the past.

Sri Aurobindo: When the real man — the true individual — is brought out, then you can place him in contact with the past. At present information is forced into the child's brain. The child can

very well gather it by himself if his mind is trained. Perfect liberty would be desirable for the child. I would not like any hard things to be brought into the child's experience. In Japan, it seems, the child is free when it is young and, as it grows and reaches the college, discipline tightens.

Disciple: But the sum total is the same whatever the method.

Sri Aurobindo: No. The Japanese are more naturally disciplined. I mean they take to discipline very easily.

ଌ

26 AUGUST 1926

The question at the evening talk arose out of the convocation address delivered by Brajendra Nath Seal.

Sri Aurobindo: All the ideas are too academic.

Disciple: Frankly I could not go through the address because of its heaviness and also too much 'internationalism'.

Disciple: But I liked it, it is readable.

Sri Aurobindo: Readable to a professor like you but not to X.

Disciple: Y read a long sentence to me out of the address and then stopped halfway for breath!

Sri Aurobindo: That way, somebody can even say the same thing with regard to the *Arya*, because there are long sentences there also.

Disciple: Someone told me that there was a striking resemblance between your style and that of Brajendra Nath Seal.

Disciple: When I read the first article of the *Arya* I could not understand anything, so I gave it up.

Sri Aurobindo: Many people cannot understand it. The *Arya*

requires two things. First of all, a thorough knowledge of the English language which many Indians have not got. And secondly, it requires a mind that is subtle and comprehensive. I wrote the *Arya*, really speaking, for myself. I wanted to throw out certain things that were moving in my mind. I did not write it for others and so I did not care to write with that purpose.

Disciple: Even P. Chaudhury says that he does not understand anything of the *Arya* except *The Future Poetry*.

Sri Aurobindo: That is not because of the style but because he takes interest in literature and knows something about it. It is his subject.

Disciple: But how is it that he does not understand anything else?

Sri Aurobindo: Because other things don't interest him. Do you think he made a serious effort to read it through and failed?

Disciple: I got the *Arya* in my college and I could never understand anything of it in the daytime. I used to begin at 11 o'clock at night and go up to 12 or 1 o'clock. Then I could understand something of it. It took me a few months to get into the style.

Sri Aurobindo: The difficulty is not merely language and style but thought also. The *Arya* makes a demand on the mind for acute and original thinking. You can't expect all men to meet that demand.

Disciple: I hear that Hiren Dutt and Dr. Bhagwandas also do not understand it.

Sri Aurobindo: But some Englishmen do understand the *Arya*. The Americans too are reading it easily because they understand the language — of course, provided they take interest in the subject.

Disciple: My friend Swami Adwaitananda understands it all right but when I met professors of philosophy at Baroda and Lahore

I found them complaining about their inability to understand it. Perhaps, people connected with Pondicherry can follow the writing easily.

Sri Aurobindo: Not always. But even *The Life Divine* is not so difficult; only, there are some chapters which anybody would find difficult.

Disciple: In his address Dr. Brajendra Nath Seal speaks of the ancient ideal of education.

Sri Aurobindo: What was that ideal?

Disciple: There was *guru grha vāsa* — living with the Guru — and corporate life.

Sri Aurobindo: Where is the *guru-grha* now?

Disciple: Seal says that in ancient times students used to do manual work for the Guru, and they were also living a corporate life, i.e., the student community working together for common ends.

Disciple: He wants modern education to be national, international, socialistic, etc. I am afraid he tries to read some modern thoughts into the ancient system.

Sri Aurobindo: That is what people usually do.

Disciple: What was the ancient system of education in India?

Sri Aurobindo: In very ancient times it was the building up of spiritual character which was the aim of education. The Guru was generally a yogi who put his influence for the growth of the student. Spiritual life was the aim, and its centre was the Veda. Of course, there was also cultural training, but it was not the main thing. For instance, take the case of Satyakama. The method of teaching was to send him out driving the cows. How does Seal reconcile that with any modern method?

The main basis in India was spiritual in contrast to the Greek ideal of education. In Greece it was intellectual and aesthetic. The

Greeks tried to give intellectual training but not through giving information and teaching different subjects. They rather allowed the intellect to grow freely and there was an atmosphere in which these capacities and activities could grow.

In India also, the classical period was much different from the ancient one in its educational system. There is no reason to suppose that the method in India did not change. During this period many subjects were taught and the system was much more elaborate.

Disciple: What is the classical time you refer to?

Sri Aurobindo: The time of Kalidasa, for instance. You see the subjects women had to study in those days. You will see there were so many arts and accomplishments they had to learn. Then there was a time when Buddhist Universities like Nalanda, Takshashila were in vogue. They were like the Schools in mediaeval Europe.

Disciple: What was the system of education in Europe at that time?

Sri Aurobindo: It consisted of discussions and general knowledge but the whole system mainly centred round philosophy.

Disciple: Can one completely get over his physical personality by the Yoga?

Sri Aurobindo: What do you mean by physical personality? There is the external personality of man which is predominantly physical but there are also the vital and mental parts. The external part of man is that which comes out but there is much more behind. Some part is very near the surface ready for expression, but some parts are so hidden that they may not come out in this life. It is the object of Yoga to harmonise the different parts in the mental being, in the vital being and the physical being. Then the whole is to be given a harmonious expression; and for that the external personality has to be got over and changed. Some of the elements may remain but they must be transformed.

Disciple: Which are the elements that may remain?

Sri Aurobindo: That depends on the individual case. There is no general rule. In Yoga the external personality is so much changed as to appear quite a different being. Thus when you are transformed by Yoga, those who have not seen you for ten years would find it difficult to recognise you.

Disciple: In the external personality there may be a combination of different personalities.

Sri Aurobindo: In the personality of man there may be mental, vital and physical elements. Man's personality is mainly physical — the mental and vital are there but generally involved in the physical.

Disciple: Are the different personalities the result of ones past life?

Sri Aurobindo: There are other elements also; the personalities of past lives may be continued with what the man creates in the present life. But it is difficult to distinguish and separate the personalities in men who are not well developed. In such cases all the elements are lumped together, and we say that the person has no individuality. I call these cases 'single-personality'. But in developed men the personalities can be easily distinguished.

Disciple: Are the contradictions in the character of a man accounted for by the difference in his personalities?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes.

Disciple: For example, Robespierre at one time could not pass the sentence of death on a criminal.

Sri Aurobindo: That was in his young age and he got over that.

Disciple: In C.R. Das there were many personalities: the lawyer, the poet, the politician, etc.

Sri Aurobindo: In your article you have said that Das's speeches were not logical. But in earlier days all his speeches were logical like

those of a lawyer. When he entered politics he gave up that habit and that was why he succeeded!

Disciple: There have been persons whose private lives are very loose but in political life they are successful.

Sri Aurobindo: What connection is there between morality and greatness? Most great men were immoral. Looseness in private morality arises from a strong vital being, and that strong vital being leads to success in great works. Immorality consists in allowing the vital impulses to go out unchecked. They may arise from strength or from weakness. In case of strength the vital impulses go out by the strength, in case of weakness they go out because they cannot be checked. Self-control, *saṁyama*, does not necessarily require one to be a yogi or a divine man. Asuras exercise control over their vital impulses to conserve energy for great enjoyment. Those who do not give indulgence to their impulses through weakness or fear of society may be respectable, but I cannot call them pure.

The ordinary idea of morality is the observance of social law. When Gandhi indulged with his pregnant wife there was nothing immoral in it according to ordinary ideas, but he regards that as immoral!

Most saints have been sinners in the earlier period of their lives — like Bilwamangal.

Disciple: There are exceptions.

Sri Aurobindo: No, the fact is that they do not confess their sins. Das was not exactly moral, but he became great.

Disciple: In his later life he controlled himself.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. He was always a very strong man.

ON MIRACLES

26 MARCH 1924

Disciple: The Puranas state that the span of life is different in different cycles. Is it a fact? For instance, Rama is said to have lived eleven thousand years.

Sri Aurobindo: That is nothing! (*Laughter*)

Disciple: It seems so, for his father, Dasharatha, lived for eighty thousand years.

Sri Aurobindo: So Rama was short-lived! (*Laughter*) But what about their statures? There is a story about Revati. Her father wanted to get her married and wished to consult Brahma about it. So he went to the Brahma-loka and he was entertained with a song by an Apsara. After the song was over Brahma asked him about the object of his visit. He asked about his daughter's marriage and suggested certain names. Brahma said all those people had already died! While he was listening to the song some ten thousand human years had passed and all was changed! The father asked Brahma what was to be done. He said: "Well, Krishna and Balaram, and others have gone down — to humanity — you may go and give your daughter to Balaram." So, Revati was married to Balaram. When she came to Balaram after marriage he looked up to her as she was very much taller than himself. He said to himself: "How am I to manage this?" He then did one thing; he took his plough and applied it to her shoulder and then pressed down with great force till she was brought down to his size and then they lived happily ever after!

Disciple: But it appears Krishna lived for a hundred and eight years only.

Sri Aurobindo: Probably the poet could not exaggerate in his case as he is historically near us.

Disciple: The poet perhaps knew that we would read these things and so he wanted to be accurate!

Disciple: I want to know whether the incidents related by the poet about Krishna's life are psychic representations or do they present facts that occurred during his lifetime?

Sri Aurobindo: What do you mean by that?

Disciple: For instance, the killing of the Asuras.

Sri Aurobindo: From the reading of the description itself you can know whether the act of killing is a physical fact or not. You can't take everything physically. There is a mixture of facts, tradition and psychic experience as well as history.

Disciple: How did the poet get them? Did he get them by psychic intuition or from the physical life only?

Sri Aurobindo: You can't take these things so literally and scientifically. The poet was not writing history, he was only writing poetry. He may have got his materials from the psychic intuitive plane, and from his own imagination, or from the psycho-mental or any other plane.

Disciple: I have a question. The poet describes the form of Sri Krishna. Now, is it the description of his psychic body or his physical body — because we see that form of his in our own psychic vision even today.

Sri Aurobindo: What on earth does it matter whether he lived on the physical plane or not? If the thing is true on the psychic and spiritual planes it is all that matters. As long as you find Krishna as a divine Power on the psychic or on the spiritual plane nothing else matters. He is true for us. The physical is merely the shadow of the psychic.

Disciple: Today our friend asked me again about the Christian and Hindu visions. He was at a loss to understand why, if Truth is one, men should get different visions. All must get the same

experience if the thing is true.

Sri Aurobindo: As if the world was so poor as not to be able to give different visions on the same plane.

Disciple: Whenever the Avatar comes, does he not undergo a period of Sadhana to make it possible for humanity to attain a higher consciousness?

Sri Aurobindo: What exactly do you mean?

Disciple: In the *Bhāgawata* Krishna is represented as a *Pūrna Avatār*— as manifesting full knowledge, power and delight, even from his childhood. Had he done any Sadhana?

Sri Aurobindo: The *Bhāgawata* is a book of religion, it is not history. Even the Mahabharata is not history. It is poetry, legend and tradition all woven into poetry, all arranged round certain facts.

But that apart, the question is: "Do all Avatars come to raise the consciousness of humanity?" Those that come to do that work practise Sadhana.

Disciple: It seems Krishna had done Sadhana.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, he seems to have done Sadhana with Ghora Rishi. But the *varāha* (Boar) incarnation does not seem to have done any Sadhana. (*Laughter*)

Disciple: Nor the *matsya* — the Fish-Avatar!

Sri Aurobindo: And what do you mean by the Purna Avatar?

Disciple: I mean complete embodiment of the Truth.

Sri Aurobindo: Of what Truth?

Disciple: An Avatar embodying the Sachchidananda — Divine knowledge, infinite power and delight, etc. — on the physical plane.

Sri Aurobindo: What do you mean by "embodying on the physical plane"?

Disciple: Bringing the infinite Ananda on the physical plane.

Sri Aurobindo: What was the sign that he embodied the divine Ananda?

Disciple: Did anyone in the past supramentalise the body?

Sri Aurobindo: What do you understand by "a supramentalised body"?

Disciple: I mean mastery over the physical laws.

Sri Aurobindo: The scientists have the mastery over the physical.

Disciple: No. I mean spiritual mastery.

Sri Aurobindo: For instance, Tailanga Swami's remaining in water; would you call it mastery over the physical? The power to work miracles, — does it not constitute the supramentalised physical?

Disciple: I want to know if this Yoga has been tried before. Did anyone bring down the Truth to the material plane?

Sri Aurobindo: Of course there is no evidence. If someone did it in the past we need not be doing it and struggling as we do. It is obvious it was not done in the past.

Disciple: Did no one try it?

Sri Aurobindo: That way, nothing is done for which there has not been a previous trial and preparation; whatever is done has been tried with partial success before. If anyone did it, it was lost by tradition and forgotten in the cycles of Time.

Disciple: Is it not possible that the Truth may have come down and then receded?

Sri Aurobindo: If an Avatar came it was a promise. The Truth was not made a fact in Matter. I can say this, that it may have been tried but it was never made a dynamic factor in the world. The difficulty in bringing down the Truth is not so much in the upper

physical layers as in gross Matter, in the most material plane.

The earth-law has to be changed and a new atmosphere is to be created. The question is not merely to have knowledge, power, etc., but to bring it down; the whole difficulty is to make it flow down.

People have very simple ideas about this thing, but it is not so simple as it is thought. It is a very complex movement. There is the Truth above and when you go on increasing in knowledge you go on ascending higher and higher, but it does not descend, does not come down at once. It comes down only when everything is ready. If the Truth could be made once the law of the earth-plane then it would endure. It is difficult to make it flow down so long as there is a mixed movement.

Disciple: Do you think that the work will be done this time?

Sri Aurobindo: You want me to prophesy? Wait and see.

Disciple: I want to know it from you.

Sri Aurobindo: I know that it can be done, but I can't prophesy: I cannot say, "It will be done." But this I can say: "Something will be done this time."

There is a doubt somewhere in the mental being, some uncertainty. The whole thing is ready behind. If there had been the certainty on the mental plane the work would have been done.

It was not done till now because probably the hostile forces were very strong. You do not know how strong they are, I alone know it; you have only a glimpse of it.

♈

24 APRIL 1924

Disciple: Dr. Coué in his book of cure by auto-suggestion wants that people should use imagination and not will for auto-suggestion

because he thinks that by using the will you exhaust yourself.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, he holds that the will creates opposition but the same is the case with imagination. Whatever you do sets up forces in opposition in movement.

Disciple: To me the distinction he draws between imagination and will is not clear.

Sri Aurobindo: In the imagination you say, "I am all right" and go on repeating it while in using the will you say, "I must be all right."

Disciple: One Indian wine merchant was photographed and he was found to emit a blue light!

Sri Aurobindo: This kind of emission of light waves from a human body is a proven fact. The scientists went and found the light waves but then they thought that they were hypnotised and so they tried the photographic plate and found the photo of a hand. These phenomena like the eyeless sight, or emission of light waves or cures by occult powers are mostly 'psychic' phenomena. It is absurd to try to explain them away and still more absurd to doubt them.

Disciple: A missionary, it seems, has cured a blind man; and St. Xavier at Goa still cures many people of their diseases.

Sri Aurobindo: That is a very common thing. In France at the Notre Dame several lame people were immediately cured. These cases can be seen by anybody who wants to be convinced about their existence. Only the forces, in such cases, work very irregularly. Some people get cured absolutely, while others are not affected. A friend of the Mother, a lady, was lame and got cured at Notre Dame. These effects are due to certain 'psychic' powers and there is no limit to their capacity.

There are cases where doctors treating their patients cure them by the use of 'psychic' powers, though the men using the powers do

not understand the process by their intellect.

(*A disciple brought in news about the elections going on in Pondicherry.*)

Disciple: Monsieur X has come here as a candidate for the seat of the Deputy.

Sri Aurobindo: The main duty of all these deputies seems to be the taking and giving of bribes. We have here a very fine object-lesson in democracy. If I had not come to Pondicherry, perhaps, I would not have lost all my faith in democracy.

Disciple: They are acting like the Fascists who also keep out all the opposition candidates and use force. But why do they beat and kill each other?

Sri Aurobindo: It is democracy, don't you see that! (*Laughter*)

Disciple: But why do they thrash the opposition?

Sri Aurobindo: You have got a majority and so you thrash with the consent of the majority!

♍

21 SEPTEMBER 1925

A letter from Rajani and Rati.

Disciple: Is there any significance in Japan having earthquakes and fires?

Sri Aurobindo: There is no special significance; these things have been there for a long time.

Disciple: Why is Japan selected for these things?

Sri Aurobindo: They have been there for twenty thousand years. They are not new. Japan is a country of wooden houses and a Japanese goes to sleep dressed so that he can jump out at the first

sign of danger. The Japanese are accustomed to keep their most precious possessions in one place. So, if there is a fire or earthquake, he simply runs out with them and then builds the house over again.

They are accustomed to live dangerously. Only recently they have begun to introduce the American style and stone buildings have been constructed. But that has brought disastrous consequences. The whole city of Yokohama is practically destroyed.

Disciple: It is now a heap of ruins. But Japan's population is increasing so rapidly that the loss of life due to earthquakes may be nothing to them.

Sri Aurobindo: Formerly also there were such earthquakes but they were not so disastrous. Besides, electricity and waterworks and other such installations add to the danger. They have been trying to use reinforced concrete and they believe it may serve the purpose. The Japanese have reduced their infant mortality to the minimum. Moreover, they are a very hygienic people — they are the cleanest people in the world.

Disciple: Even in India now there is an awakening of the sanitary sense.

Sri Aurobindo: Where?

Disciple: In Ahmedabad the Sanitary Committee took the municipal staff and some volunteers and have cleaned up one of the biggest, narrowest and most thickly populated localities — Mandwi. It took them more than three days. At the end lectures were given about the necessity and means of keeping the locality clean. The proposal is to clear the whole city gradually.

Disciple: When the Sanitary Committee has gone to one end of the city it may find that the other end it has left has become again as filthy as it was.

Disciple: If public opinion is cultivated and the sanitary consciousness awakened then after such efforts legislation may be

passed to maintain cleanliness.

Sri Aurobindo: Oh yes, these things require vital energy. In a nation like ours which has got vital depression such an effort is necessary and good as it brings it out from the Tamas into which it has fallen.

Disciple: Do you mean that every man has to get rid of the vital depression?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. If you are subject to vital depression you will be unable to do a work on the physical plane with an alert mind for a long time.

Disciple: X has been learning music.

Sri Aurobindo: That is not what I mean by getting rid of vital depression. I mean doing something on the physical plane, not necessarily physical work alone — regularly at the same time without fail with an alert mind, and feeling no fatigue or mental apathy and seeing that it is done well without any mistake or carelessness.

Disciple: Suppose one were to do such work mechanically?

Sri Aurobindo: That is not what is wanted. One must be alert in the mind. The Europeans succeed in their work because they have that alertness of mind.

Disciple: I showed X how to prepare Halwa and do it every day in ten minutes. Then he began to argue that he was not accustomed to do it! and then to say that it was difficult to do everyday! But the joke is that at last he told me: "You see, it is not *our* work!" (*Laughter*)

Sri Aurobindo: There, you see!

6 OCTOBER 1925

Sri Aurobindo (*turning to a disciple*)**:** I spoke to the Mother about the theory that thumb lines do undergo change. She confirms the belief of our palmists — the *sāmudriks* — that the *rekhās* — lines on the palm — change.

There are several judicial errors — well-known — in which thumb-impressions have been proved false. There was the famous case of an army-man who was charged with having accepted bribes from the Germans. The case was tried by various courts and at last the man was acquitted. When the prosecution produced the thumb-impression, the judge refused to give any importance to it saying it was a scrap of paper. There was a discussion in the French Assembly about the thumb-impression to be introduced for foreigners in France. The counter proposal was that as it was humiliating they ought not to introduce it, as they would not want to give it themselves.

♉

8 JUNE 1926

Disciple: It is said that the life of man is ruled by the stars — is this a kind of symbolism or is it true?

Sri Aurobindo: It is not completely true that man's life is governed by the stars. The conjunctions of the stars are an indication of the forces, especially vital and physical forces. They exert a certain influence on man and the course of his life. It was, perhaps, the Chaldean occultists who found the inner basis of these calculations. Now, only the tradition remains. Astrology is not yet an exact science; it is not purely mental. It is the man whose mind can touch the forces that are behind the stars who can make correct predictions. What is important for man is the inner life and on that

the stars have little influence.

♊

18 JUNE 1926

Disciple: There are two ways of foretelling the future: One is the astrological calculations which are based upon the general lines of character and happenings indicated by the stars. Another is that of clairvoyance in which the image of the future event, correct even to the minutest detail, is brought before the vision. How does this happen?

Sri Aurobindo: These clairvoyants are awake on the subtle plane and because they are passive these images which are already there in the subtle impose themselves upon their vision; of course, you must have this vision in order to know the future.

Disciple: Can the events, thus foreseen, be averted? Generally, there is something always missing in the vision which does not allow men to escape it, e.g., the place or the time of the event is not indicated. But there are some instances in which the foreknowledge of the event has allowed the man to change the result foreseen.

Sri Aurobindo: There is a vital image which is a possibility and it can be prevented; secondly, there is the image of the event on the subtle physical plane which, if it is fixed, cant be avoided.

Disciple: Are there events absolutely fixed which cannot be changed?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, there are. If you want to change them then you have to go to a plane which is higher than the one where these things are decided and that is not always easy.

There are three kinds of movements which one has to distinguish in seeing the future. First of all there is the result of the actualities: it is a very narrow field and things there are fixed and it

is generally the very near future. Secondly, there is a play of potentialities in which certain forces are struggling and you can see the force which is most likely to succeed. But generally it is that force which represents the higher decision on that plane. But you can't be always sure that it will succeed unless you know definitely that it represents the highest decision — the Truth. Thirdly, there is a higher plane where important decisions are made. For that movement you have to go very high. It is difficult to distinguish between these three and most of the clairvoyants make a confusion.

Disciple: There are cases where the most minute details have been known by clairvoyance.

Sri Aurobindo: One has to be passive and often the decision to be taken or the happening that is going to take place, forces itself upon one.

Disciple: Is seeing the past the same faculty as seeing the future?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. But it is much easier to see the past. The impression and memory are left on so many things.

Disciple: Is it the same thing that A.E. speaks of as the 'earth-memory' in one of his books?

Sri Aurobindo: What do you mean by the memory of the earth?

Disciple: All things leave their impression in the world and they are all stored up in the earth-consciousness. When A.E. was travelling in Egypt he saw much of the history of Egypt in the subtle.

Sri Aurobindo: That is something quite different from earth-memory.

Disciple: There is a Being or a Spirit behind every place, I believe; for instance, is there no conscious being behind Pondicherry?

Sri Aurobindo: Do you mean *nagar devatā*, the presiding deity of the town?

Disciple: Something like that.

Sri Aurobindo: It is true that there are beings behind collective units, like the nations. There is what you may call the national *devatā* or national Shakti.

Disciple: Is there such a being behind India?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes.

Disciple: Is it possible to know it, to come in contact with it?

Disciple: Is it possible to know the future of the nation by coming in contact with this being?

Sri Aurobindo: I think so. But I don't think the future is known that way.

Disciple: Does it shape the future of the nation?

Sri Aurobindo: It has a part to play in it. It controls some of the forces that act.

Disciple: Is this being something more than the aggregate consciousness?

Sri Aurobindo: It has the aggregate consciousness and it has an individualised consciousness of its own. It is not the determining deity or the *adhiṣṭhātā devatā* in the sense that it entirely shapes the future, but it, in a way, represents the racial — the national-soul.

Disciple: Is there any such thing as the evil genius of a nation?

Sri Aurobindo: This idea is akin to the Christian conception of good and evil always counterbalancing each other and it corresponds to the old idea of good and evil spirits. But there is no such rule that wherever there is a good spirit there must be the evil spirit.

II

28 JUNE 1926

The subject was miracles or acts that appear extraordinary in the lives of great spiritual persons. Ramana Maharshi, the great Yogi of Tiruvannamalai, was once beaten severely by robbers. They thought that he had a lot of money hidden somewhere but as they failed to locate it they caught him and beat him. At last they found only utensils, which they started taking. Ramana Maharshi told them, "But why don't you take some food which is ready, and then take the utensils?" They did not listen to him and beat him. He fell into Samadhi and his limbs were swollen with the beating. The police caught the burglars and brought them before Ramana Maharshi for identification, but he refused to identify them.

Disciple: There is a story about Tailanga Swami, that once he was beaten by robbers and the marks of the beating were found on the body of the son of a robber.

Disciple: No. That version is not correct. The story is that a prince was coming to take a bath in the Ganges with his two queens and so a portion of the road leading to the bathing-ghat was screened off to conduct the Ranis to the river in *purdāh*. When they were bathing, Tailanga Swami, who used to remain in the Ganges submerged for days together, suddenly appeared on the surface of the water and the king whipped him mercilessly. When he went home he found the marks of the whipping on his sons body.

Disciple: Ramakrishna also had a similar experience when the bullock that was being driven by the gardener was whipped in spite of Ramakrishna's protest; the marks of the whip were reproduced on Ramakrishna's body.

Disciple: The story in the *Rāmakrishnā Kathāmṛta* is different. It refers to two fishermen who were quarrelling. One of them slapped the other on the back and Ramakrishna who was on the bank got the mark of the slap on his body.

Sri Aurobindo: All these stories are there, the question is how

many of them are true.

Disciple: But apart from their being true or not, are they possible?

Sri Aurobindo: I have already told you "anything is possible", because the power of auto-suggestion is practically unlimited. There is the instance of St. Francis of Assisi on whose body the marks of the crucifixion were reproduced merely by the power of auto-suggestion. Well, if you have a stronger power than that, you can immediately find any marks on your body. Ramakrishna himself seems to have said that when he was doing Hanuman Sadhana, he grew a little tail.

Disciple: He also said that when he was living in *sakhibhāva*, the Radha attitude, he developed feminine characteristics on his body.

Disciple: But it is also said that you have the power of raising your body from the ground!

Sri Aurobindo: Who told you?

Disciple: They say that when you were in jail and also at Pondicherry, when you used to meditate, your body used to be lifted from the ground.

Sri Aurobindo: Nonsense. And in X's writings perhaps I am represented as walking above the ground. So you see how legends come up?

Disciple: But you yourself told me that it is true and not nonsense. I asked you one day whether it was possible to raise the body from the ground. You said it was and so I thought it was true in your case.

Sri Aurobindo: There you are! If I say something is possible, does it follow that it is actually done; for example, if I say it is possible to attain physical immortality, does it mean that I have achieved it? Not at all.

Disciple: But then is there no basis at all for this widely held

report? I have heard it from reliable men.

Disciple: Those who start legends generally say they heard it from a reliable source.

Disciple: But when you were in jail some part of your body was raised in a peculiar fashion. Is that not true?

Sri Aurobindo: That was once in jail. I was then doing a very intense Sadhana on the vital plane and I was concentrated. I had a questioning mood, whether such things as the Siddhi of *utthāpanā* were possible. Then suddenly I found myself raised up in such a way I could not have done it myself with muscular exertion: only one part of the body was slightly in contact with the ground and the rest was raised up against the wall and I know I could not have held my body like that normally even if I had wanted to. I also found that the body remained suspended like that without any exertion on my part. That is the only thing that happened. In jail there were many such extraordinary and, one may say, abnormal, experiences. As I was doing the Sadhana on the vital plane I think the power might have come from there. All these experiences passed away and did not repeat themselves.

Disciple: Moti Babu has related that when you were five years old you got a vision of a great light at Darjeeling and you became unconscious.

Sri Aurobindo: And then, what happened further?

(*After some time*) All that is a legend. I told him something because he was constantly asking me about my childhood. I had no such experience of light when I was a child. My uncle told me that I was very bright, but I have no recollection of those days and if you want the truth it was not light but darkness that I saw at Darjeeling. I was lying down one day when I saw suddenly a great darkness rushing into me and enveloping me and the whole of the universe. What I told Motilal was that after that I had a great Tamas always hanging over me all along my stay in England. I believe that

darkness had something to do with the Tamas that came upon me. It left me only when I was coming back to India.

If people were to know all the facts about my life they would never believe that such a man could come to anything.

Disciple: Moti Babu related to me about your conversion to Christianity — how one day when you did not attend Church the priest asked you about it next day and then you did not make any reply but simply wept.

Sri Aurobindo: What is all this legend? I never became a Christian and never used to go to Church. Who has built up this fantastic story?

Disciple: Moti Babu was telling us.

Sri Aurobindo: I told him something quite different and the manuscript which he sent here did not contain any account of the light I saw when I was five!

The only thing that happened was that there was once a meeting of non-conformist priests in Cumberland when we were staying in England. The old lady in whose house we were living took me there. In such meetings after the prayers are over all disperse and devout people generally remain a little longer afterwards, and it is at that time that conversions are made.

I was feeling completely bored. Then a priest approached me and put me some questions. I did not give any reply. Then they all shouted out, "He is saved, he is saved," and began to pray for me and offer thanks to God! I did not understand anything. Then the priest came to me and asked me to pray. I was never in the habit of praying but somehow I did it in the manner in which children recite their prayers before sleep — in order to keep up an appearance. That was the only thing. But I never used to attend Church. I was then about ten years old. The old lady's son, Mr. Drewett, never used to meddle in these affairs because he was a man of common sense. But he went away to Australia.

When we were staying in London this old lady used to have daily family prayers and reading of some passage from the Bible. One day Manmohan said something about Moses which made her wild. She said she did not want to live under the same roof with unbelievers, and went to live somewhere else. I felt infinitely relieved and grateful to Manmohan. We were then entering upon the agnostic stage in our development.

I was a great coward virtually and I was weak physically and could not do anything. Only my will was strong. Nobody could have imagined that I could face the gallows or carry on a revolutionary movement. In my case it was all human imperfection with which I had to start and feel all the difficulties before embodying the Divine Consciousness.

Disciple: Moti Babu told us that you caught the revolutionary spirit from Shelley's *Revolt of Islam*.

Sri Aurobindo: That is not quite true. *The Revolt of Islam* was a great favourite with me even when I was quite young and I used to read it again and again — of course, without understanding everything. Evidently it appealed to some part of the being. There was no other effect of reading it except this that I had a thought that I would dedicate my life to a similar world-change and take part in it.

(*After a pause*) No, I had no extraordinary spiritual experience in my early life.

I remember only three experiences. One was the Darjeeling experience. And the second came upon me at the age of twelve or thirteen. I was extremely selfish and then something came upon me and I felt I ought to give up selfishness and I tried in my own way — of course, imperfectly — to put it into practice. But that was a sort of turning-point in my inner life. The last came just before I left England. It was the mental rather than the spiritual experience of the Atman. I felt the One only as true; it was an experience

absolutely Shankarite in its sense. It lasted only for a short time.

Disciple: Is it a fact that you came away straight to Chandernagore from the *Dharma* office? and that the C.I.D. by God's grace were not there?

Sri Aurobindo: I was at the *Karmayogin* office and we came to know about the search that was going to be made, evidently with the object of arresting me. There were some people there and Ramchandra Majumdar too was there — preparing to give a fight to the police — and so many ideas were flying about when suddenly I heard a voice from above saying, "No, go to Chandernagore."

After coming out from jail I used to hear voices and in those days I used to obey them without questioning. So I told my friends that I would go to French India and then the arrangement was made. The C.I.D., I don't know whether by God's grace or the prostitutes' grace, were not there.

Disciple: Then about coming to Pondicherry also you heard a voice?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. It is quite true.

96

30 JULY 1926

Disciple: Is there any truth in the belief that the three times prescribed for the *sandhyā* are more favourable for meditation?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, they are. These transitional times — especially the evening times — are times when you are most likely to be attacked by the hostile powers.

Disciple: Is there no time which gives one the greatest immunity from these attacks?

Sri Aurobindo: I don't think there is any such time; if you are

open to them you can be always attacked and more so at these *sandhyās* — transitional times.

Disciple: There is an idea that the bright half of the lunar month is more favourable to Sadhana than the dark half.

Sri Aurobindo: There is some truth in it, I think.

Disciple: Is there any truth in the omens in which men believe?

Sri Aurobindo: Well, you can make them true if you want to.

Disciple: Is there no truth in them?

Sri Aurobindo: I say that if you accept their suggestions and want them to come true the powers that are trying to materialise them may succeed.

Disciple: I had an experience which is unforgettable. When I started from home my head struck against the door, and people asked me not to go. I did not heed their advice and went. The train by which I travelled collided with another train and many people died and I had a narrow escape.

Sri Aurobindo: Did all the people who started for the same train get a knock on their heads? And also, in spite of the knock you did escape!

Disciple: Once my father suddenly awoke in the dead of the night and asked me to run out of the house as it was going to collapse. He dragged me out and the moment we were out of the verandah a portion of the house collapsed.

Sri Aurobindo: That is not an omen, it is a premonition. Many people get that sort of intimation. You can always get it provided you are open to it in the subconscious and you allow it to come up to the surface in the conscious being.

Disciple: Do you mean that there are forces that intimate these occurrences?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. Man is surrounded by these small physico-

vital beings and some of them take a great interest in man. They know the near, the immediate future, what is just going to happen. They can intimate it to you if you are open.

Disciple: Are these ghosts?

Sri Aurobindo: Ghosts are spirits of dead people, while 'spirit' is a general term.

Disciple: I had fear of ghosts; when I knew there were no ghosts my fear disappeared.

Sri Aurobindo: On the contrary, my fear went away when I knew that there were ghosts!

Disciple: Where does fear come from? Some say it is a function of the spleen as anger is due to the liver.

Sri Aurobindo: Really speaking, fear is in the vital being. When you have thrown it away from your mind and other parts of your being you can see it still passing through you, below the navel. There is a connection between fear and your intestines.

Disciple: Telepathic capacities of the high-class Hindus is due to their pineal gland being twice as developed as that of Europeans. Because of this development they receive telepathic communications more easily than other people.

Sri Aurobindo: What is the function of the pineal gland?

Disciple: Its function is not yet exactly known.

Sri Aurobindo: It was supposed to have something to do with the circulation of blood. Where is it situated?

Disciple: It is just below the level of the two hemispheres of the brain.

Sri Aurobindo: On a level with the eye-brows?

Disciple: A little above, perhaps.

Sri Aurobindo: The truth is that these parts act as receiving channels for a higher activity. For instance, now it is well known

that the seat of thought is not the brain. The brain is only the communicating channel.

❁

BETWEEN 6 AND 10 AUGUST 1926

The question of work outside, i.e., in the external field, was raised.

Sri Aurobindo: Work can be done in many ways. For instance, I can create a row in India through a communal organisation — without giving lectures, or writing in the press. Once the Yogic power is there you can do many things. But the question is whether a particular activity is in keeping with the movement of the Truth. That is quite another maner. One has to see to it that one acts according to the Truth.

Then the question about building a greater India founded upon the Truth was put to Sri Aurobindo.

Sri Aurobindo: I have no such ambition. My ambition is to bring down this Truth into the world and I don't think its sphere would be confined to India. India may be the starting-point but it would act on the whole of humanity.

As to the nature of the work to be done for the world, I don't want to speak now. It is best to leave it to be done at the proper time. But it is the Truth that has to come down and show the form that the work must take. Whatever form it may take, ours is only to be fit instruments for the manifestation of the Truth.

Disciple: Is it we who would make the greater India?

Sri Aurobindo: It is quite wrong to say that it is we. If India wants to make itself it is its own business. No one can make a whole nation.

It may be that when the forces are quite in readiness a man may appear who may have to embody the spirit of the times in himself and so one may feel that he has made the nation. But really speaking it is the nation that has to make itself. It is not like X making the cake; you can't make a nation that way. Nations and such other living entities must grow — they have to grow just as any other living thing grows. No one makes them.

If a greater India is to arise it means, for us at least, that it should be in the image of the Truth we are trying to bring down. In that case, if it succeeds, the Truth itself will create its own forms, and then it would not be correct to say that we have created the form, because in any case the Truth that we are trying to bring down is greater than ourselves.

There was a reference to Egypt, and the question was: What do the pyramids and the Sphinx stand for?

Sri Aurobindo: I don't know the details about them. But evidently the pyramids and the Sphinx must have been connected with the ancient Egyptian religion and occultism. The Egyptians seem to have developed the occult knowledge to a very great extent and it was a dynamic element with them. But as for spiritual knowledge, I don't think they had very much.

(*A question was put about the mummies*.)

Sri Aurobindo: The Egyptians believed that there was a personality of the vital being that remained attached to the body and the idea in preserving the dead body was perhaps that the person might be able to take up the body again or to return to the earth plane.

Disciple: If this work of bringing down the Truth does not succeed in India, do you think India will lose the chance for ever?

Sri Aurobindo: India has the greatest chance because of her past and because the spiritual force is accumulated here. The real

movement is from Above — the Truth trying to come down. Then there is a general upheaval and the vague feeling of the Truth coming down — the idea of Avatars, a general questioning of all sorts of ideas — and also perversions of the same Truth. But all is due to that movement from Above.

But if India remains indifferent and sticks to old worn-out forms and refuses to move forward, or listen to the call of her soul, then the Truth may recede and try somewhere else. The Truth is not confined to India, it is not India's property. But there is very little chance of its succeeding elsewhere if it fails in India. It may make an unsuccessful, or partially successful, effort somewhere else, like Christianity, and then retire.

ଣ

3 SEPTEMBER 1926

Disciple: One Mr. Sharma, president of the Spiritualist Society in India, says that spirit-communication is not only possible but probable. There are also table-rapping stances in which spirits are said to reply to questions. What is the truth behind these things?

Sri Aurobindo: Generally, no spirits come from outside. The will of the medium and of the men participating creates a force which brings about the manifestation. The answers generally are from the minds of men who are present. They come from the subconscious mind as also from the subliminal mind which knows many more things than men are aware of. The concentration of men produces the necessary atmosphere, as I said. Genuine cases of intervention of spirits from outside are very rare. Dead persons can communicate with the living if they feel interested in life, or in men, and are sufficiently near. The Mother knows about séances. She herself could make a table move across a room by her will-force.

But the idea that all sorts of departed persons are hanging about for centuries and respond to table-rapping is ridiculously absurd.

Disciple: There are cases where persons who are dead have informed their friends or relations. Also there are cases of possession by the spirits of dead persons.

Sri Aurobindo: Persons while dying may create thought-forms which can appear before relatives who are at a distance. Also dying persons may leave behind influences which may be taken up by vital beings and used. That would explain genuine cases of obsession or possession by the ghost of departed persons.

Disciple: Can a devilish force appear in a human form?

Sri Aurobindo: It is a very complicated thing; if it can take possession at birth it may appear in a human body.

ଌ

4 SEPTEMBER 1926

Disciple: Yesterday you said about a table being moved across the room. Such an obvious physical effect you said could be produced by will-power.

Sri Aurobindo: It is not exactly will-power — that is only a way of saying. Of course, the power represents itself as will-power to the mind. The will is there as a controlling agent, but really it is a form of vital energy. You can say it is the kinetic vital energy. It can produce a physical effect if it is strong enough and can lay hold on the vital-physical. It is really the vital-physical being that lays hold on the material object and deals with it.

Disciple: One can understand a case in which there is intervention of another physical mind, say in the case of mesmerism.

Sri Aurobindo: In mesmerism one uses the same energy. If one has sufficient force the same can be used to work directly on an object.

Disciple: You once said that it is easy to stop the tapping of the table.

Sri Aurobindo: I was not speaking of these powers on the vital plane, I was speaking of the Supermind. It is a force like electricity; only, it acts in a different way and under different conditions. In these spirit-communications certain conditions are generally created in the atmosphere which act as the carrier of the force and make it effective.

ON PSYCHOLOGY

30 MAY 1923

A Dream

Sri Aurobindo: Some dreams have got meaning down to their very details. I saw one yesterday.

There was a scientist and a magician. Both of them wanted to rescue a girl from alien enemies. The magician was the psychic and mental man who knows the Truth but does not know concretisation of the same. He has the grasp of the Spirit but not of the process and its details.

The scientist and the magician tried to save the girl. The magician failed. Then the scientist tried; he found himself baffled by the opponents as they — *dasyus*, the hostile vital powers — were not struck down by the blows of the sword or of anything. The opponents were going to a king's capital. Then they fled and the girl was taken away.

The scientist was a geologist who had made the discovery that the strata of the earth must be measured from the top and not from the bottom. When the enemies fled they left; their things behind and did not like to go into the capital wounded. The scientist then found a big book on geology — half as big as this room — among the things left: behind, and he found the girl just between the cover and the pages.

The secret of the earth, the physical nature, was thus symbolicaily given.

II

10 JULY 1923

Disciple: When a man leaves his body, does his soul assume another birth at once?

Sri Aurobindo: It depends on what you mean by the 'body' and by the 'soul'.

Disciple: It is said that the soul has to take another physical life in order to complete its evolution.

Sri Aurobindo: What do you mean by 'evolution' of the soul? If you mean by the 'soul' the essential Self then it requires no evolution.

Disciple: What is the law of connection between the living and the dead?

Sri Aurobindo: Your question seems to imply that the physical manifestation is the whole manifestation. The body is merely a circumstance in the manifestation of the soul. What we mean by a world or a plane is a state of consciousness. What is then the meaning of going? The soul has not to travel through any space, it only goes to another state of consciousness.

Disciple: Where does the soul depart after death?

Sri Aurobindo: Again, what do you mean by 'departing'? It only goes to another state of consciousness as I said.

Disciple: In our country the belief is that after a man's death the soul remains in a certain condition and as it cannot complete its evolution there it has to return to human life. The question is: How is this done?

Sri Aurobindo: As I said, for the essential Self there is no development, no evolution.

Disciple: In the Chhandogya Upanishad it is said that the departed soul comes down in the form of rain and then enters plant life and is born through females.

Sri Aurobindo: Do you mean to say that whenever it rains so many souls are pouring down? (*Laughter*)

Disciple: It may be a figurative way of saying, perhaps.

Sri Aurobindo: It is meant to be symbolic.

Disciple: It seems there are two purposes for which souls descend into human birth. Perfected souls come down with the Avatar to take part in his Lila and help the world with him.

Sri Aurobindo: That is not the ordinary birth. But the question can be why there is any birth at all. It is as good as asking: "Why was the world created?" Or you can ask: "Why are you and I here even though we are divine, and, in a sense, perfect?" We can only say that a soul assumes birth in order to manifest divine perfection, to manifest the Divine in life. That is all we can say.

Disciple: One part of the question was about the machinery of rebirth, if I may put it that way.

Sri Aurobindo: There are two things: the body and the soul. The body is an ordinary formation and I suppose you know what science says about the composition of Matter: It is all a play of atoms and they can be resolved into electrons and the electrons are formations of certain forces in the physical world. Then you come to the vital body — that is a formation from the vital world. And then you have the mental body, which is a formation from the mental world. Similarly, the psychic being is also formed.

I leave aside other minor divisions of the being. This is only a rough outline. If you want to go into details, the physical alone has five planes. Then you come to the soul. Ordinarily the soul is not understood as the Jiva. 'Soul' does not denote the essential personality which is eternally one with the Divine and is always in the presence of God. So also 'soul' does not mean Atman, the Self, because for this Self there is no evolution. What is generally understood by 'soul' is the psychic individualisation which persists even after the dissolution of the physical body and the vital and

mental sheaths.

Now, when a man dies his physical body dissolves; the vital body dissolves after some time, and the mental body also dissolves. Take the case of an insect. In the insect there is only the physical consciousness and nothing else. Other formations in the universe are too low to be considered. The insect gathers certain experiences on the physical plane. My own view is that it goes on developing from plane to plane with a supporting Self. The soul — *sūkṣma dehī* — living on the physical plane returns to the Jiva which was all along supporting the insect in the physical consciousness. When the soul is ready, it is taken up into the vital plane and there it gathers experiences till the mental plane is reached in man. There is the Supramental plane also.

What we do in our Yoga is to bring down the Supramental plane so that the soul may return with the full experience to the higher plane. The question is how far we can supramentalise. If we can supramentalise the mind and the vital being we can return with the memory of that experience and also with that ready formation in another manifestation. One can preserve, if he so chooses, his vital body after death and produce effects on the vital plane.

Now suppose we supramentalise the body. In that case we can carry the full physical experience and return with the fullest physical, vital and mental force and manifest the Divine. That is what happens in the case of Avatars and Vibhutis, — there is full memory of the past vital and mental experiences and in the case of the Avatar even of the physical experiences. If we can supramentalise the body it can be retained or thrown away at will —*icchā mṛtyu*. And even when the body is thrown away, when the process of manifestation is undertaken the soul has not to gather the physical and the vital and the mental from any of the formations of Universal Nature — as in the case of ordinary souls. In case these — the physical, the vital, and the mental — are supramentalised the whole being is quite ready; one has simply to take up the ready

formation and manifest the Divine.

Disciple: But what affords the material for the physical or the vital bodies?

Sri Aurobindo: What do you mean by "what affords"? It is already there in Nature, as there is electricity, gas, etc.

Disciple: What is Nature?

Sri Aurobindo: The Universal Divine has projected the Universe and there is Universal Nature which affords all the material for us. Essentially, everything in Nature corresponds to something in the Universal Soul. For instance, the vital corresponds to the divine Tapas. The details about the law and the process of rebirth are too complex to be given exactly. It is a complicated question.

♉

1 JUNE 1924

Sri Aurobindo sat watching a spider busily preparing its web round the electric lamp, as it found a lot of moths flying around the light on account of the rainy evening. The spider was frantic in its haste to have its web in time, which was being constantly broken by the insects flying around; it could not put in a new thread quickly enough. Somehow it managed to get a sort of net ready within five minutes.

Sri Aurobindo: He has got quite a feast! He is again running to make the web strong. He ties up the moth in a corner and then goes about preparing the web. He knows mathematics!

Then Sri Aurobindo recalled an incident in the Guest House when a spider wanted to balance the whole web. It put a grain of sand but finding it too heavy it cut it off, and instead put in a straw and

found the balance was all right.

Sri Aurobindo: You see, these spiders are very resourceful. They know what they have to do and then they learn by experience and experiment.

Disciple: Only, they do not speak.

Disciple: How do you know?

Disciple: They do not speak to us.

Disciple: You do not speak to the cow! (*Laughter*)

ଓ

4 AUGUST 1924 (MORNING)

Disciple: What is the distinction between the vital will and mental will?

Sri Aurobindo: The vital will is an impulse first and thought afterwards. It is, you can say, force first and thought afterwards. For instance, desire — if deprived of the element of 'desire' — is an impulse or force going out or trying to realise itself.

While mental will is the will connected with thought. It is primarily a thought-force. Every thought has its will. Even in the Supermind there is a distinction: there is sometimes a force that tries to realise itself while there is at times a knowledge that tries to be effective, though primarily it is knowledge and secondarily force. In the highest Supermind the two are one: Truth and Force, Knowledge and Will — both simultaneous and effective.

The sadhak must make the calm and equality absolutely secure so that whatever may happen the inner detachment and equality cannot be broken.

ଣ

30 AUGUST 1925

Sri Aurobindo: There is one Major Hill who is fit to be an inmate of a lunatic asylum. He has invited Gandhi to the Society of Psycho-Analysts and explained to him how the Hindu-Muslim problem is merely a problem of a complex. It is due to the cow-complex. (*Laughter*)

The Major said further: "If you want to bring about Hindu-Muslim unity you must change the symbol to something else than the cow! Then there would be no problem."

Disciple: I read an article by a biological analyst, or a psycho-biologist perhaps, in which the divorce between Kamal Pasha and his wife was explained. It said Mrs. Kamal had a great love for her parents; she did not love her husband. Secondly, she had in her the masculine complex which made her a suffragist. The writer also explained how Napoleon divorced Josephine because he loved his mother, and that Queen Elizabeth had a masculine complex but those who came in contact with her had not the feminine complex in them strong enough to keep her to them. He even says that Gandhi has a complex! One can never know what is this complex business!

Sri Aurobindo: All that I know about it is that when you repress something in your nature it goes down into the subconscious. But this generalisation that all you do is due to complexes is quite new.

Disciple: Is it correct?

Sri Aurobindo: No. The old European psychology had nothing of it. The new psychology has something, but it is false.

Disciple: Is it all false? Does it not make an advance upon the old?

Sri Aurobindo: It is an advance in the sense I mentioned that the old had nothing whereas this new one has something which is false. The Europeans have got a fixed idea about these sciences. They

observe some abnormal phenomena, study them, find out a general law and then try to apply it everywhere. Napoleon, Elizabeth, Begum Samru all behaved in particular ways because they had complexes. It only means that a man has a certain character and his actions are determined by that character. This we knew ten thousand years back, there is nothing new in it.

The difficulty is that they want to work in psychology in the same way that they work in physics. But psychology is not so simple. You cant generalise in it as you can with matter. It is very subtle, and one has to take into account many factors.

If you say that everything we do produces an influence on our inner being and leaves an influence there, and conversely, that whatever is within us in the subconscious does influence our actions to some extent — that is all right. But more than that is not tenable. Take their theory of dreams. It is perfectly true that dreams are due to something from the subconscious rising up during sleep in an irregular and fitful manner. But that does not account for all the dreams. The realm of dreams is very wide. There are other kinds of dreams, not due to the subconscious. Human psychology is very complicated.

Disciple: Do you mean to say that the new psychology is not at all correct?

Sri Aurobindo: I mean it is false, and inasmuch as it tries to work on the lines of the physical sciences it is absurd; for, there is no correspondence.

Disciple: It was Freud who started the complex theory.

Disciple: And he cured people by his theory, you must know.

Sri Aurobindo: Theory can never cure anybody. Do you yet believe that a theory cures? Curing people, or getting a certain result, does not depend upon the theory at all. A theory may be true or false and yet you may obtain results from it. A theory simply puts you in a condition when something behind you can work

through you. That is the whole stand of Bergson. Theory merely convinces you and thereby produces the necessary inner condition. That is all. It may be true or it may be false. Freud may have cured people as Coué cures them now. But does he cure them by his theory? Not at all; it is because he has some power that people get cured by him. You can try to apply the theories of psycho-analysis to remove obstacles and complexes from human nature and you will see that you do not succeed.

Disciple: It is true, it does not go as deep as Yoga.

Sri Aurobindo: It starts its work on a wrong foundation.

♎

18 OCTOBER 1925

There was talk today about the animal mind.

Sri Aurobindo: With the report of the rats you have also the instance of monkeys crossing a river. It is not mere instinct. The calculation of the height of the tree, formation of the chain and the idea of the breadth of the river, requires mind.

I saw the other day the report of a dog which made friends with a horse. The groom used to steal from the ration of the horse. Either the horse complained to the dog, or the dog itself came to know about it, but the dog knew about the theft. One day, when the man was actually stealing, it went to the master and brought him there!

Animals seem to act upon memory, association, invention and adaptation of means. They think with the vital mind while man thinks with the reason.

♎

19 OCTOBER 1925

The talk turned to cats.

Sri Aurobindo: They have a great vitality. They disturb the whole atmosphere when they are excited and throw the vital force all around while they are in that state. They have a wonderful vitality.

Someone brought in the subject of small-pox and of vaccination and anti-vaccination theories. There was a discussion during which a disciple argued that statistics supported a particular view.

Sri Aurobindo: Statistics are not always reliable; they are often deceptive and manipulated to bring about conclusions which men want to draw from them.

♈

APRIL / MAY 1926

The talk started with a reference to X's shrinking from the fish which was given to cats, and Y's shrinking from a meat diet.

Sri Aurobindo: I had myself got that nervous shrinking. Bipin Pal and I once went to the Dakshineshwar temple. There a great animal sacrifice was going on. I stood it all right but Pal was very much disturbed. I got rid of it completely in jail. Pity and nervous shrinking are weaknesses of the vital being.

Disciple: What is the idea of Patanjali's Ahimsa?

Sri Aurobindo: I don't know. You must ask Patanjali for it. (*Laughter*)

Disciple: The question is: "What is to be done with bugs?" X can stand any number of them.

Disciple: His capacity depends upon the size of the bugs; if they are big he minds them! (*Laughter*)

Disciple: Y is an executioner of bugs!

Sri Aurobindo: When a thing is to be done then it is *kartavya karma*, as you know from the Gita. At that time if I am full of pity it is a weakness. If it is a question of driving out the British, you can't think of pity at the same time! You can't think of the loss of jobs of many persons or loss to British commerce.

Shrinking is nervous in its nature, while pity is in the heart. It is an emotion. It has more to do with the psychic being. The Ahimsa of the Jains is more theoretical than that of other communities. They have no objection to cruelty if it does not take that particular form which by their customs and Sanskaras they are made to abhor. Gandhi's idea of Ahimsa does not debar him from inflicting suffering on himself and on others. He does not see that he is responsible for their suffering.

Disciple: How is one to know whether it is shrinking or pity?

Sri Aurobindo: You can feel it within you. You sense the shrinking. Sensation and feeling are quite different things. Shrinking is primarily in the nervous being while pity is a feeling.

ϒ

29 MAY 1926

Disciple: X was expressing intense regret while leaving Pondicherry.

Sri Aurobindo: Was it sincere?

Disciple: At least I felt it was at the moment. But there seems to be a double personality in him.

Sri Aurobindo: This is not a case of double personality in which

one is oblivious of the other, for he evidently remembered what he wrote.

Disciple: In the beginning he seemed a different person but then he changed.

Sri Aurobindo: No, the case is that of a being of the vital plane that comes and takes possession of him. It represents itself as myself or the Mother and it is this being that suggests fantastic explanations of my letters to him.

Disciple: What would be the result of this kind of possession?

Sri Aurobindo: There are two results possible: either he may go mad, or he may manifest some power and pretend to be a great Avatar.

(*After a pause*) It is easy to fall in this Yoga, but it is very difficult to reclimb.

Disciple: Was his fall due to some weakness in the physical being?

Sri Aurobindo: He had made his body weak in the non-cooperation movement by resorting to ascetic practices. But his weakness was not more than what other people have got. His chief defects were in the mental and vital beings. He has a very narrow mental being — practically no mind at all, only conventional ideas about religion and spirituality. But he had a remarkable aspiration and intensity in the vital being. He progressed more than anyone. But he had also a great vanity in him and believed that he was someone very special. He aimed at becoming the Superman in the egoistic sense. He then went into a sort of ecstatic devotion, weeping and calling Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in order to pull down the Supermind in one year! He came to such a pass that he lost control of the physical reality and he thought that I was making him do all those things which, in fact, I did not want him to do! He was not able to control his body and used to fall on his knees when the impulse came. He had an attraction for magical and miraculous

things and believed that a yogi must not eat or sleep.

Disciple: Is it possible to have such a control over the universal vital plane as to make it impossible for these vital forces to represent themselves as the Truth or yourself and the Mother?

Sri Aurobindo: It is a question of consciousness and not of the physical plane where you can prevent somebody from doing something. Nothing is possible without the co-operation of the individual. The difficulty is that he wants to have that being of the vital plane and, even when it is driven out, calls it back.

Disciple: What is the effect of this being on him?

Sri Aurobindo: When we took away the pressure he felt like an ordinary man, he felt pains in the body. In some cases where the man resists, there are fits and hysteria, etc.

Disciple: Why is it that the vital being drives him here — makes him come to Pondicherry?

Sri Aurobindo: There are various beings and they have various tendencies and motives. They are attracted to this place for various reasons, yet they do not want to obey.

Disciple: What is the aim of these beings in taking possession of a human being?

Sri Aurobindo: Firstly, to have influence on the physical plane which they can have by taking possession of a man. Secondly, to play a joke — just to see what happens. Thirdly, to play God and be worshipped. Fourthly, to bring about a manifestation of vital power. To this class belong those beings that effect miraculous cures and have great healing powers. Fifthly, to satisfy some desire or impulse like murder or lust. From this point of view you will see that capital punishment is absurd. A man who murders is, most probably, under the possession of a vital being. When he is executed that being takes possession of another. Many of those who commit murder have admittted that they had their first impulse

when they saw an execution.

Some vital beings want to have their play here.

Disciple: Why do they do like that?

Sri Aurobindo: They get supported. But these are not strong beings. The really strong beings are those that are behind world-movements, like Theosophy; they have not only vital force but mental power.

Disciple: What is their part in evolution?

Sri Aurobindo: They only exhibit power; they do not generally take up a physical body.

Disciple: Have they an idea of progress?

Sri Aurobindo: Their idea of progress is increase of power. But they can be converted. Théon — who was the Mother's instructor in occultism in Algeria — believed that those forces or beings who try to come in touch with the physical are destined to be converted.

Disciple: Do they change their vital nature?

Sri Aurobindo: They remain vital beings but instead of aiming at power for themselves and manifesting it egoistically they consent to manifest something higher. They need not take up a body for that. They can remain on their own plane and work here as an influence for a higher life.

Disciple: Does the soul of the man who is possessed try to recover the lost ground?

Sri Aurobindo: After some time, during possession, there is no soul; it is thrust behind, into the background. Generally, in man the soul is not in front. By Yoga the soul comes to the front. But it can be thrown into the background by these forces taking advantage of some weakness, some vital or physical defect — unless the Central Being comes down and takes hold of the instruments.

Disciple: Can these forces take possession when a man has got a

fine mind — a mind which is higher than the vital impulses?

Sri Aurobindo: What is man's mental knowledge before those beings? What does man know? Practically nothing. They know the complexity of forces at work, while man knows nothing of it. Man has a great destiny if he goes along the right lines, but as he is, he is shut up in the physical consciousness which is a very inferior plane. Even his reason requires data for its knowledge, and argument or reasoning can justify anything. Two quite opposite conclusions can be supported by the aid of the same reasoning, and your preferences determine which one you accept. For the data of reasoning, again, you require to depend upon what you see and hear — on your senses. The vital beings are not so foolish as all that, they are not so limited.

II

22 JUNE 1926

Disciple: What is the relation between the inner mental, inner vital and inner physical beings and the psychic being?

Sri Aurobindo: The inner mental, vital and physical beings are the instruments of expression of the psychic being. You can say that they are formulations of the psychic being here for manifestation in earth-evolution. It is the psychic being which supports them here. It stands behind them. The psychic being is what the Europeans call the 'soul' — it is the 'true person' in man. It is the innermost being in the lower nature, it is the direct representative of the Divine in the lower nature. It is generally supposed to be behind the heart. It is behind the emotional activity which is its surface manifestation. Ordinary emotional activity is not psychic in its nature. True psychic emotion is very deep, and it is a pure spiritual emotion. The psychic being opens directly to the Higher Truth and can receive it here.

Disciple: Is it the psychic being that governs man's inner mental, vital and physical beings?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. But in ordinary man the psychic does not govern most of his actions. They are dictated mostly by outside influences.

Disciple: You said when speaking about X that he had broken the veil between the inner mental and the psychic being. What did you exactly mean by it? Is there such a veil?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, there is a veil: that is why most people are not conscious of their soul. In X's case I used the word psychic in the ordinary sense. He had broken the veil between the mental and the vital planes, and opened himself to the worlds behind them, but he was unable to bear all that followed. There I used the word in the sense of the 'subliminal self'.

Disciple: Is the influence of the psychic being mainly in the inner mental and vital beings or is it subconscious?

Sri Aurobindo: Everything that one is not ordinarily conscious of is subconscious to him. It means that something happens behind of which the surface man has no knowledge. But really speaking nothing is subconscious. In a certain sense one can say that even the superconscient is subconscient.

Disciple: What has the psychic being to do with the Supermind?

Sri Aurobindo: The psychic being is not the Supermind. For instance, one can, by breaking the veil, somehow get into the subliminal or the psychic being, but one cannot get to the Supermind like that. The psychic being opens to the Higher Truth, but it is itself not That, it receives the Truth. The psychic being is what is 'behind' the mental and the vital and the physical beings, not 'above' them.

Disciple: What is the difference between the psychic and the spiritual being?

Sri Aurobindo: You can't speak of the spiritual being except, of course, the being of Sat-Chit-Ananda which is not individual. These three principles are above the Mind and constitute the upper hemisphere. The mental, vital and physical constitute the lower hemisphere. Between the two hemispheres is what I call the Supermind.

You can't get to the real Sat-Chit-Ananda. But you can have — as do most people who say that they have realised Sachchidananda — the experience of it in the mind or in the vital being. But you can't organise it here even though you get the experience. The organisation of the Infinite Consciousness, the Sachchidananda, can only be done by the Supermind.

Disciple: Is the psychic being the entity that survives death? What is meant by *kāraṇa śarīra*?

Sri Aurobindo: It is not the psychic being which presides over reincarnation, but the Jiva, the Central Being, which according to its need gathers the material from Nature. The *kāraṇa śarīra* generally means the supramental body.

Disciple: In the orthodox terminology, though *kāraṇa śarīra* means *vijñānamaya*, yet they speak of it not as a means of development but as a means of escape. To them the use of the *kāraṇa śarīra* is to burn away the seeds of everything that is in Nature. They believe that unless the seed is burnt there in the *kāraṇa śarīra* one can't really get liberation.

Sri Aurobindo: It is true, because the seed of everything that you see here is in the Supermind and unless you get to the Supermind you can't really get rid of imperfection in nature.

For instance, take filial love. Generally it represents something of the Above, but the form it takes entirely misrepresents it. Now, if you want to remove this error you have not merely to keep it down, because then it is not really gone, but you have to offer it up to the Higher Truth, and when you know the truth behind it, then you are

no longer subject to the false form it generally takes. So it is with everything.

Disciple: They generally tried to get to the seed of all imperfection here and then they tried to escape from the world.

Sri Aurobindo: That was the old idea. It was based on the assumption that the Truth, the Supramental, can't be organised here in this world. Because all that is here is imperfect, false, is not the Truth; the Mind tried to organise the Truth here and failed, so they thought that "going into the Truth" meant leaving the mind and life etc. And by an exaggeration of the same idea the world appeared not merely imperfect but an illusion. Coming back to life to them meant coming back to the falsehood. That is what is meant by the Upanishad's image of "escaping through the door of the Sun". If you want to come back you can do so as long as you are in the rays of the Sun. But once you enter the body of the Sun you cannot return. To start from another assumption — that "life *is* false and imperfect but we *can* manifest Truth and perfection here" — is possible. The Truth cannot be manifested in life here with the present formulation and organisation of the human consciousness which works with mind as its chief instrument. The mind cannot organise Truth here. But a higher formulation, organisation, of consciousness is possible here.

Disciple: Even the desire to organise it here, the Mayavadin would like to call an illusion.

Sri Aurobindo: That way even the desire for getting away from the world is an illusion!

Disciple: In Tantra it is said that one should renounce even the desire for liberation.

Sri Aurobindo: That does not help very much to renounce the desire to get liberation.

Disciple: It is all right for those who have reached liberation, but not for those on the way. (*Laughter*)

Sri Aurobindo: One of the logical conclusions of the Theory of Illusion was the idea that you must reject everything violently and that you can't get the Truth unless you are disgusted with everything in the world. That is what is understood to be Vairagya. But I don't see any reason why one should be disgusted with everything before one can take to the spiritual life. What we do is that we see the imperfection in the world and we do not accept the ordinary life which is subject to ignorance and falsehood. But we do not despise it — we do not look upon it with disgust and contempt. We look upon it with calm and equality — Samata — and try to understand what it is and what place it occupies in the Lila and its purpose.

Disciple: Generally, it is supposed that a man takes to the spiritual life as a result of dissatisfaction. Is the dissatisfaction a psychic dissatisfaction in its nature?

Sri Aurobindo: What do you mean by psychic dissatisfaction?

Disciple: The psychic dissatisfaction reflected in the mental or the vital being.

Sri Aurobindo: The true dissatisfaction is different from the mental or vital dissatisfaction, which comes when, for instance, somebody runs away with your wife, or you have lost money.

Disciple: Then directly you go to a Guru! (*Laughter*)

Sri Aurobindo: The true dissatisfaction comes from the inner being which is not satisfied with the ordinary life — once it is touched by the psychic being.

Disciple: Is aspiration always psychic?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. True aspiration is always psychic in its origin. It is "Agni rising from the earth", as the Veda says, "towards its own home". The Agni there is the "fire of aspiration". It takes mental or vital forms which may be imperfect and therefore there may be imperfection in the aspiration itself. But even behind these

imperfect forms there is something that is burning. Once one has awakened this fire it is impossible for him to rest satisfied with the ordinary life.

Disciple: Does Agni always signify the psychic aspiration in the Veda?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. But there are various forms and powers of Agni in us and also in the universe. This Agni in the inner being they spoke of, most probably, as the *gārhapatya* — the Fire belonging to the Lord of the House.

Disciple: What do we mean when we say that the psychic being in a man has come to the front or when we say that it has become strong?

Sri Aurobindo: When we say that the psychic being has come to the surface we mean that it has begun to exert its influence on the other members of a man's nature. It becomes first an active influence and ultimately it is *the* influence in the being. And the result of this influence is to turn the whole nature towards the Truth. In proportion as it increases its control and its influence over the formations and personalities in a man, we say that his psychic being is more developed.

Generally, there are certain external signs by which you can find out whether the psychic being of a man is more developed. For instance, such a man has greater purity, delicacy in life in dealing with people and refinement of taste. One can hear, also, the voice of the soul which generally comes from the psychic being. But it should not be confounded with the voice that is heard in the mind. The psychic voice is true and it has something more imperative in it than the mental voice.

Disciple: Has the psychic being its own activity and field apart from its working through the mind, the vital and the body?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, it has got its own activity and its own field.

Disciple: But this psychic being, then, though present in all men, is not known to them?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes; for the ordinary man you can say that his soul is not at all within his reach. He is so much given to the vital life and other external impulses that he is hardly conscious of his soul except at times when he has glimpses of it.

Disciple: Is it possible for a man to completely cut off connection with his soul? Occultists speak of 'soulless man'.

Sri Aurobindo: The question is whether the majority of men have got connection with the soul at all.

Disciple: It seems, then, that the soul of man is not interested in ninety percent of his activities and keeps aloof.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. Generally most of man's activities are dictated by outside influences and not from the inner being.

Disciple: So it is the soul that receives the call for the spiritual life?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes.

Disciple: Is it possible for the whole psychic being to come at once to the surface or does it come gradually?

Sri Aurobindo: Generally, man catches glimpses of the soul and by degrees the soul comes to the surface till the whole being is controlled by it. But there is no fixed rule; the whole of the psychic being can come to the surface all at once.

Disciple: It seems most men get the spiritual awakening through suffering. Is suffering a necessary part of this awakening?

Sri Aurobindo: No, I don't believe that. It is entirely an erroneous idea. It is a Christian doctrine and is a perversion of the Truth.

Disciple: Is suffering not a purifying agent?

Sri Aurobindo: Not always; it involves subjection to forces that

are not spiritual and for self-purification one need not always undergo suffering.

Disciple: Mostly, men turn to the spiritual life after receiving some shock.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, it is so in some cases, though not in all. A man may be attached to something, and when the object of attachment is suddenly removed he completely turns over a new chapter in his life. Something that stands in the way is knocked down and then the call is heard.

Disciple: That means the preparation is already going on beneath and it comes to the surface suddenly after the shock.

The manner in which the call for the spiritual life comes to a man is also sometimes very sudden. For instance, in the case of Lala Babu it came in the following manner: One day he was going on his way when he heard two fisher-women speaking to each other. One said: "It is late, darkness is coming, difficulties may come, let us hurry home." This gave him the necessary push for entering the spiritual life.

Sri Aurobindo: Such things happen very often. These outer things serve as excuses, or rather occasions for giving the necessary touch, especially in a country like India where the spiritual atmosphere is all around you, and the least touch is sufficient to open a man to it.

Disciple: Do you think that it is more easy to get the spiritual life in India than in any other country?

Sri Aurobindo: It is not a question of my thinking, it is a fact. Because we have been doing that work for the last four to five thousand years, the whole past is living in a remarkable way, so that the slightest touch can open a man to it if he has anything in him which supplies the necessary material.

Disciple: Why is it that the spiritual life is more difficult in

Europe than in India?

Sri Aurobindo: Firstly, because the Europeans never had it in such a degree as the Indians; and secondly what they had is for away from their mental and vital life, and so it has receded behind. Perhaps it is coming back now there also. That is why Europeans who have got a spiritual aspiration turn to India. It does not mean that they turn to Indians but to the accumulated spiritual force that is here. At any rate it is easy to make a start in India.

Disciple: Is it not also easier to fight the obstacles that come in the spiritual life in India than outside?

Sri Aurobindo: Not necessarily, — and not all. There are some obstacles which you can easily overcome here, but there are others which you can overcome more easily in Europe. For instance, Mayavada is more difficult to get rid of in India than in Europe.

Disciple: Are Indians more spiritual than other people?

Sri Aurobindo: No, it is not so. No nation is entirely spiritual. Indians are not more spiritual than other people. But behind the Indian race there is a past spiritual influence.

Disciple: Some people, who are prominent national workers in India, seem to me to be incarnations of some European force here.

Sri Aurobindo: May not be incarnations, but may be strongly influenced by European thought. For instance, Gandhi is a European — truly, a Russian Christian. And there are some Indians in European bodies!

Disciple: The Mahatma a European!

Sri Aurobindo: Yes; when the Europeans say that he is more Christian than many Christians and that he is "the Christ of the modern times" they are perfectly right. All his preaching is derived from Christianity, and though the form that is given to it is Indian, the essential spirit is Christian. He may not be exactly Christ, but at any rate he comes in continuation of the same movement.

He is largely influenced by Tolstoy and the Bible and by Jainism in his preachings; at any rate, more than by the Indian scriptures — the Upanishads or the Gita which he interprets in the light of his own ideas.

Disciple: Many educated Indians consider him a spiritual man.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, because the Europeans call him spiritual. What he preaches is not Indian spirituality but something derived from Russian Christianity, non-violence, suffering, etc.

Disciple: He admits to have been greatly influenced by Tolstoy.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. Tolstoy was his Guru.

Disciple: The Russian people have an enthusiastic but tragic and gloomy temperament.

Sri Aurobindo: They are a queer mixture of strength and weakness. They have got a passion in their intellect, say, a passionate intellect. But although they have a distracted and restless being, there is something in it which is very fine and psychic. And therefore I am not right when I said that Gandhi is a Russian Christian because he is very dry. He has got the intellectual passion and a great moral will-force but he is more dry than the Russians. The gospel of suffering that he is preaching has its root in Russia as nowhere else in Europe. Other Christian nations don't believe in it, at the most they have it in their mind, but the Russians have got it in their blood. They commit a mistake in preaching the gospel of suffering; we also in India commit the same in preaching the idea of Vairagya.

Disciple: Perhaps the Mahatma would be more successful as a leader in Europe.

Sri Aurobindo: If you mean as a political leader, he would have been nowhere successful.

Disciple: But his antagonism to machinery and his idea of simplicity of life would have been accepted in Europe.

Sri Aurobindo: I don't think so. There are plenty of people who are against machinery, though they may be in the minority and powerless — and there was, at any rate, a fashion of simplicity. He would have, of course, given a European form to his ideas.

Disciple: What about the Charkha?

Sri Aurobindo: There are people in Europe who are enthusiastic about it, but the Charkha after all is a minor point.

Disciple: There are people in India who regard Mahatmaji as a spiritual man because of his *yama* and *niyama* — the vows of self-control and simplicity and his Ahimsa, love, etc.

Sri Aurobindo: There is a great difference between the aim of Patanjali and that of Gandhi and Tolstoy. The aim of Patanjali was to rise to a Higher Consciousness. He proposed to do it by replacing the general Rajasic movements of nature by the Sattwic ones. There was no idea of morality or ethics in it, and he never made *yama* and *niyama* the aim of the discipline. His aim was to rise above the ordinary consciousness and even his idea of *saṁyama* was not dictated by morality. He wanted to gather power for a spiritual purpose and so he discouraged the spending away of forces in the ordinary way.

Disciple: The Gita speaks of four kinds of Bhaktas: *ārta* — distressed, *jijñāsu* — seeking knowledge, *arthārthī*— one who wants to serve some purpose, and *jñānī*— the man of knowledge. What is the meaning of *arthārthī*?

Sri Aurobindo: When you want God for serving some of your own aims.

Disciple: For instance, when you wanted God for the liberation of India.

Sri Aurobindo: Then I was an *arthārthī* Bhakta.

Disciple: A mixture of *jñānī* and *arthārthī.*

Sri Aurobindo: No. I had no knowledge. I did not know what

God was. It was two years before I met Lele that I began Yoga seriously. Deshpande at that time was doing Hatha Yoga, Asanas and other practices and, as he had a great proselytising tendency, he wanted to convert me to his view. But I thought that a yoga which requires me to give up the world was not for me. I had to liberate my country. I took it up seriously when I learnt that the same Tapasya which one does to get away from the world can be turned to action. I learnt that Yoga gives power and I thought: Why should I not get power and use it to liberate my country?

Disciple: God very cleverly exploited your desire to liberate India.

Sri Aurobindo: It was the time of the country first, humanity afterwards and the rest nowhere. It was something behind that got the idea accepted by the mind; mine was a side-door entry into the spiritual life.

II

25 JUNE 1926

Sri Aurobindo (*turning to a disciple*)**:** You said last time that suffering purifies. Can you explain in what way?

Disciple: When suffering comes it forces one to separate himself from the instruments and recognise his true self and so he feels pure and light and this helps him to rise above the lower nature.

Sri Aurobindo: It need not make you to separate yourself from suffering unless you have got the power to stand back from it; but this power is not inherent in suffering. Take the case of the unfortunate persons who are put into prison. They suffer, but suffering does not purify them; on the contrary, it makes them worse. To my mind suffering is a sign of imperfection of nature. It is a stamp of imperfection on the individual and universal nature.

You have to learn from suffering: firstly, why it is there, and, secondly, how to overcome it.

But if you take delight in it and invite it like the Christian monks who used to get whipped and took pleasure in it — that I consider a deviation and a perversion.

Disciple: Is it not true that when we suffer we turn to God?

Sri Aurobindo: Not necessarily. There are people who suffer and suffer and never turn to God.

Disciple: Tagore says, "Suffering or joy, whatever you give, I put it on my head and accept with equal joy."

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, yes. That is all right. That is like all things highly sentimental and not necessarily true.

Disciple: Why should I protest when God sends me suffering?

Sri Aurobindo: I don't protest. I only learn, I don't fly away from it and shrink from it. You have to look upon it as upon everything else in the world — like sin and evil, for instance. But you have not to accept sin and evil.

Disciple: But everything comes from God.

Disciple: Christian mysticism derives its idea of rejoicing in suffering from intense Bhakti. Everything is seen to come from the beloved and welcomed.

Sri Aurobindo: What does not come from God? Even evil and sin come from God. Why not accept them? If God drives you towards your neighbour's wife why not accept it? They — sin and evil — have their place in the universe to fulfil and in evolution also. But that is not the law of the human soul; the soul is not here for suffering. The Gita speaks of the Asuric Tapas and says that people who invite suffering torture the elements in the body and torture "Me", Krishna, who am seated in the body.

When you say everything comes from God, you have to accept it with some common sense. It is all right so long as you are in the

Vedantic consciousness. Everything comes from God is another way of saying that the Infinite manifests itself in everything. But it is not necessary that the manifestation of the Infinite here should take the forms of suffering and evil.

Disciple: Suppose I take everything as coming from God, can I not progress in the spiritual life?

Sri Aurobindo: You can take up any attitude which may give you spiritual benefit, for instance, if suffering comes, you can put your attitude roughly as follows: "I have been touched, I know the cause from which it comes, and I must get rid of it."

That is quite different from taking pleasure in suffering as the Christians do. In the movement of the Infinite there are both good and evil, suffering and joy, i.e., there are the higher and the lower movements and if you accept and invite the lower and take delight in it, well, you can have it! If you want suffering, God will give you enough of it. That way would not lead you to rise above it.

Disciple: Generally, suffering comes because something in the man takes delight in it.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, of course. Even when there is the rejection, something very obscure in the vital and the physical being takes pleasure in it.

Disciple: Why should I accept one movement of the Infinite and reject another? What is the criterion?

Sri Aurobindo: Knowledge is the criterion. You accept those movements that help you to grow and release you into the divine consciousness and reject those that bind you down.

Disciple: Supposing I change suffering into joy?

Sri Aurobindo: Then it is no longer suffering. It becomes an experience of Ananda. All this idea of suffering and self-immolation comes from the Asuric vital plane where suffering is the law of development and it is the Asuric influence that casts it on

humanity.

Disciple: Is not suffering as well as evil a law of all manifestation?

Sri Aurobindo: Not at all. It is only a circumstance of our evolution. There are planes where the element of suffering does not enter at all.

Disciple: Is not duality a necessary law of manifestation?

Sri Aurobindo: No, it is also a circumstance of our evolution. Duality is the device of manifesting the Infinite in Ignorance through imperfect instruments. For instance, in the Supermind and Supramental world all these things — suffering, duality, etc. — do not enter at all because there is no possibility of them.

What is suffering? Suffering means that the consciousness is not able to bear the contact of certain forces and assimilate them, because I have not got in me what the Veda calls the *ṛtam* — the true or the right movement of consciousness. Take physical pain — what is it? A certain force comes to me and I am not able to seize it and master it, bear the contact and assimilate it, and the reaction is pain. If the full force, or even a sufficient force, to meet the contact were there, there would be no pain. It is the same thing with regard to what is called error, evil, or sin. Really speaking, it is the infinite Ananda which becomes perverted into suffering here in duality. But suffering does not enter into the infinite Ananda, as conceptions of good and evil do not enter into the infinite Power nor error into infinite Knowledge.

Error is there and enters into me, because I am not able to enter into the knowledge that comes to me in that form and extract it out of it and assimilate it. The same is with evil.

Disciple: But why is there this suffering in the world?

Sri Aurobindo: The fact is that the Infinite creates a figure of himself in the Inconscient — you can say, even in the Nescient —

and tries to manifest by the pressure of his infinite power, higher and higher degrees of consciousness till it reaches the Divine. This happens because in the Infinite there are infinite possibilities and all of them are bound to realise themselves at some time. This universe is only one of its possibilities. If you ask why he creates it, we have to say, "Because it is possible." We are obliged to say, "He does it for Lila." It is not proper to expect God to act with the same motives as men. If you ask "why" and "for what purpose" in the human sense, then there is no reply.

Disciple: You said that there is the Asuric plane or world from which this idea of suffering comes. You said that suffering is the law of their development. Is suffering their only law?

Sri Aurobindo: There are two worlds: one Divine and the other Asuric. The Divine is a world of harmony, idyllic beauty where everything moves in order. You may call it a world of ideals — a world of freedom — i.e., free movement towards Truth, Power and Ananda. But it is not possible to realise it here on this earth. On the other side there is the Asuric world which is a world of force, violent and hard — a world of self-aggrandisement, self-mortification and self-immolation. Harmony there is not. It moves by conflict, struggle, strife. The Asura increases his power by suffering, by what the Gita calls Asuric Tapas — by violent means and self-torture, and thus tries to approach the power of the Gods.

Disciple: Humanity is badly off between these Gods and Asuras, because the perfection of the Divine world cannot be realised here on this earth as it is not the law of our plane, and on the other side there are the Asuric impulses and tendencies.

Sri Aurobindo: That is the old conflict between Gods and Asuras symbolised by all the religions.

Disciple: But the religions say that you have to follow the Devas and then you are safe.

Sri Aurobindo: It is not so easy. It may be very good for them

but not for the man because they desire the Ananda from his Tapas in their own plane as the Asuras do in theirs. At a certain stage in the Yoga you can clearly see these two worlds and distinguish the impulses coming from there. But if you want to manifest the Truth here, you have to climb above to some still higher plane from where the world of the Devas and the Asuric world derive their truth. When I spoke of "the Divine world" I did not mean of "the greater Gods". Both Daivic and Asuric worlds deviate the sadhak from the straight spiritual climb.[15]

Disciple: You spoke about the increase of power through suffering. It is, I believe, of the same nature as the physiological reactions due to serums. Whenever a certain poison or germ is introduced into the system the whole system reacts in such a way as to produce more anti-toxin and anti-germ bodies than are necessary to kill the obstruction.

Sri Aurobindo: But that is not an example of suffering; it is the law of fight. It is well known that to a certain extent, fight increases the power in man. But suffering is quite different.

Disciple: But if we have to reject suffering, we have also to reject pleasure because it is also imperfect.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, that is why the Gita says you have to reject both, as also *rāga* and *dveṣa*, ignorance and partial knowledge. We have to go beyond duality to the true Ananda which is here misrepresented by both pleasure and pain.

Disciple: There is a sect of Shiva worshippers in Bengal who put themselves to great tortures. Perhaps their idea is that they will earn more *puṇya*, merit, by doing so.

Sri Aurobindo: The Indian ascetic idea of torturing the body is

[15] This docs not refer to the true Gods; it should be noted that there are Devas — little and great gods — on many planes of consciousness. Worship to them binds the human soul to the lower levels and thus prevents its ascent to the Higher Consciousness beyond the mental, vital and physical consciousness.

not exactly the same as the Christian idea of suffering. They don't want self-purification through suffering. They have the idea of self-mastery, that the body shall do what the spirit wants it to do. That is the idea behind asceticism. Self-mastery has been the trend of Indian thought all along its spiritual development. Even Buddha, when he started, had the idea of uprooting suffering and evil from the world. Only, he said that you can't achieve it here in this world unless you go to Nirvana. The Indian ascetic self-torture was done in the violent Asuric way and by self-will trying to master the body by throwing great vital force upon it. There was also a certain contempt for the body and for the limitations which the physical being imposed upon the spirit. It was a violent revolt against that bondage.

Disciple: The Christian idea is "Blessed are those that mourn, for they shall be comforted." Perhaps they are rewarded in heaven in proportion to their suffering.

Sri Aurobindo: It is not so mathematical as that. It only means: when you suffer more, more grace is upon you. It is an opportunity that God sends you to liberate yourself. According to them salvation is in the Cross — it is, in fact, a symbol of salvation.

Disciple: Even among Christians we find people who have different ideas. For example, the Christian Scientists simply deny the existence of suffering. It is said to be an illusion that will vanish if we reject it.

Sri Aurobindo: It is true. But to deny it only with the mind is not enough, you must deny it with the whole of your being.

Disciple: There was the instance of a man whom cobra poison did not affect. Is that possible?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, it is possible, if you can reject it not by the mind but with the physical consciousness also. But while you are rejecting it with your mind, your body is crying, "Oh, Oh!"

Disciple: But instead of simply denying suffering would it not

be wiser to look for the cause of suffering and uproot the cause? Then suffering would vanish.

Sri Aurobindo: What is the cause of suffering?

Disciple: If I get pain in the stomach the cause may be that I have overeaten.

Sri Aurobindo: It is true that refraining from overeating may help you to get a stomach without pain. But even then you may get stomachache.

What you say comes to finding out what is called the law of measure of your nature and trying to keep it. There are two ways: one is obedience and the other is mastery. What you speak of is the way of obedience. It is all true so long as you are on the ordinary level. But I am speaking about it from the highest spiritual standpoint.

Disciple: How is it possible to transform pain into Ananda?

Sri Aurobindo: At first we can gain in two ways by suffering. One is, we learn to bear it; and the other, we find something in us which does not suffer. Wlien we have got the separation we can learn the way to transform suffering into Ananda. In the first stage some part of the being stands apart from the suffering and enjoys it. In the second, the Ananda of the separate self enters into the suffering. Lastly, there remains only intense Ananda and pain is transformed into it.

Disciple: A manuscript is said to have been found in Tibet which says that Christ came to India and learnt Buddhism, then went back to Jerusalem and preached his gospel.

Sri Aurobindo: It is a very old story. I believe it was a Russian who invented it. I heard it when I came back from England.

Disciple: There are so many contradictory statements concerning Christ and nobody is able to prove anything. Some scholars even question whether Christ existed at all.

Sri Aurobindo: It does not matter in the least if Christ lived or not. The thing for which the name stands is there, it exists.

Disciple: Is it possible that such a movement could gain in mankind without anybody to organise it?

Sri Aurobindo: That is not impossible.

Disciple: Do poetic creations also live in the same way?

Sri Aurobindo: Not in the same way.

Disciple: Did Rama live, or is he merely the creation of Valmiki?

Sri Aurobindo: There is no ground to believe that Rama is a historical figure.

Disciple: But the account of the conquest and other things?

Sri Aurobindo: Do you believe a king marches to Lanka with an army of monkeys? Valmiki may have taken it from tradition, or from imagination, and created figures which so well suited the Indian temperament that the whole race took them into its consciousness and assimilated them.

Some even believe that there were Ramayanas before Valmiki's and that even in the Veda you find Rama symbolising the Divine and Sita standing for the earth. It also may be that Valmiki brought it over from some Daivic plane to this earth. Rama might have lived but one cannot say anything definite.

Disciple: What about Krishna?

Sri Aurobindo: Well, Krishna stands on a different footing from that of Rama. He seems to be a historical character. All the myths that have gathered round his name may be later additions. But he is mentioned in the Upanishad and seems to have lived. He is mentioned there as "Krishna, son of Devaki — one who lived in the island"; there is also mention of Dhritarashtra. There Krishna is recognised as one of those who had the divin knowledge. He was, no doubt, somebody who made a very deep impression upon his age. But it does not matter whether Krishna, as he is popularly

known, lived or not; Krishna exists in a much more real way than the physical.

It is very difficult to separate what the founder stands for and what has been added on to his name afterwards. For instance, very little of what is now known as Buddhism was taught by Buddha. Take the doctrine of *karuṇā*, compassion. It was brought in by the teachers of the Mahayana school.

Disciple: According to popular belief among the Jains, Krishna is now in the seventh hell! And in the next cycle he will be one of the Tirthankars! He is now in hell because he was responsible for so much killing — *hiṁsa.*

Disciple: In Bengal the Mahomedans have made Rama accept Mahomedanism and they have written books to prove it!

Disciple: There is a story of two Christian monks which is proved to be the same as that of Buddha and Ananda.

Sri Aurobindo: Religions are very funny. Instead of all these absurdities, if they get to the thing that is behind the religion, it would be more to the purpose.

Disciple: What do you think of *Prāyaścitta* as a means of purification?

Sri Aurobindo: It is atonement; it is a form of punishment for breaking some custom or social law. It has nothing to do with spiritual purification. It is akin to legal punishment.

Disciple: It is generally given in ritualistic Smritis.

Disciple: There is a belief that a bath in the Ganges purifies a man. Is there any truth in it?

Sri Aurobindo: In that way everything does some good.

Disciple: Ramakrishna used to say about the bath in Ganges that when you are taking the bath your sins hang on the nearest tree and as soon as you are out they catch you and stick to you again!

Sri Aurobindo: Some people are said to feel pure and light after atonement. But generally they are ready to make another fresh start! All these ideas about death in Kashi and removal of sins are simply heresy and deceits of the vital world.

ϑ

2 JULY 1926

Disciple: You said the other day that birth, growth, decay and death, that is the law of life, but it is not absolute; it is only a groove created by Nature.

Now, we have in atoms an example of a different law of life because they have a beginning and an end, but they have no growth and decay. Their death has been studied by science in the case of radio-active elements. The scientists speak of the life of an atom as the period or length of time necessary for its disintegration. The life of an atom varies greatly; radium is said to have about 1300 years. But the point to be noted is that the death rate is exactly the same for old and newly formed atoms. They have practically no age, and their death is not brought about by decay and wearing away.

Sri Aurobindo: When I was speaking of 'life' the other day I meant to imply those forms of life like the plants and animals in which life is more organised and complex. Of course there *is* life as well as mind and even supermind in the atoms, but these are not manifest and not organised, not on the surface as it were.

These principles — life and mind — would not manifest if there was not the pressure from the higher planes; because of the pressure they come out and organise themselves. That is the reason why we feel pressure from above when we bring the Supermind. The Supermind tries to enter into Mind and Life and Matter and transform them.

Disciple: According to the biologists the characteristics of life are growth from within, assimilation, reproduction, and fatigue.

Sri Aurobindo: There is no fatigue in the vital force. Fatigue is only a circumstance due to the imperfect equilibrium between the physical and the vital. The same is with the mental. If you can open to the universal vital and mental you find they are inexhaustible.

Disciple: What is the nature of the balance between the physical and the vital?

Sri Aurobindo: What do you mean by the nature of the balance? There is a fixed quantity of vital force and mental force that can be used by the physical body. The body is not able to bear a very great amount of those forces. That is why the modern man is much more delicate than the savage.

These words, 'assimilation' and 'reproduction', do not explain what life is. They are simply properties of life. You cannot know what life is with mental knowledge.

Disciple: We have different manifestations of life on the physical plane. If we take molecules, cells and organised bodies — the three forms — we find at each stage that it is necessary to have a higher force. For instance, molecules by themselves cannot form or build a cell, and similarly a cell cannot build a body. Their growth would only be an amorphous mass.

Sri Aurobindo: That is true. There *is* the difference in the scale, but there is no gap, really speaking, from Matter to the Highest Consciousness — though the manifestation of life when seen through the mind may seem so.

Disciple: For instance, scientists find a gap between dead matter and living. They can explain how the dead particles of food — i.e., Matter — pass through the stomach and how they are absorbed, but they cannot explain how they are changed into living cells. They also cannot explain how the nervous stimulus, sensation, is changed into thought.

Sri Aurobindo: How do you know that food particles are dead Matter? Because there is no such gap, the transformation cannot be understood by science. It is futile to ask 'why', because science can only know the 'process', the 'how', of things.

Disciple: Bergson says that mental knowledge only applies to the physico-chemical world and that the problem of life can only be grasped by intuition.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, it is true. Mind itself understands nothing. You say "this is the reason" but the same act of reasoning can lead you to a quite opposite conclusion. Even when a man acts, or seems to act, according to some 'reason' he acts not by mental reasoning but by something from above — intuition. At a certain stage the substance of the mind itself is transformed into the intuitive mind. Then it is found impossible to resume the old mental activity. Intuition is an image of the Supermind; materials collected by the mind are there, of course, but they don't enter into the final decision. They are not the chief determining factor.

Then you go on developing more and more and manifest higher and higher degrees of supramental working in which the action becomes increasingly more independent of the mind.

Disciple: Can an individual in the Supermind know the function of, and deal with, the material world without the direct intervention of mental knowledge?

Sri Aurobindo: When it is perfect, there is no more need of mental knowledge.

Disciple: I mean to say this: take a piece of glass; it is found by experiment that certain substances in certain proportions are necessary to make the best glass.

Sri Aurobindo: If the supramental consciousness were perfected in the physical there would be no need of experiment.

Disciple: Do you mean to say that a supramental being could be

a better electrician without study and training in electricity?

Sri Aurobindo: Why not? Do you think that the Supermind is inferior to the mind? There is a doubt at the back of your mind whether such a thing is possible.

Disciple: Yes. It staggers the mind to think of it.

Sri Aurobindo: Up to the present time nobody has cared to bring down and apply this Power to the physical plane. Something was done in the mind and also in the vital being but not in the physical. Firstly, the yogis did not care for these questions of the physical plane. Secondly, they had other, more direct, means of dealing with them.

Disciple: Will all supermen be able to do it?

Sri Aurobindo: How many supermen are there? But as I say, this new Consciousness is a gradual unfolding. You find it in the atoms of your body and there is a consciousness in the cells; you can also feel and understand the forces on the physical plane when it descends. But it is very difficult to bring it down to the physical. And even when it comes down there are fields in which it is well organised and works better and others in which it struggles and stumbles and errs. It develops itself first in parts which are more prepared by your past development. Then the development is gradual and not miraculous. We may even doubt if it is possible to make a beginning at all, for, it is something which has never been done and the field is not prepared. But if we grant the supposition that this earth *is* the field of higher and higher manifestations of Consciousness, then it is perfectly logical to suppose that all physical phenomena would be brought under the control of this Higher Force.

Disciple: All supermen would be able to do it?

Sri Aurobindo: Once you start it will go on working and there is no reason why it should be limited. The past efforts have not prepared it — one can even doubt if it can come into the physical at

all. The Higher Force is our one hope. We can make a beginning, afterwards it can be perfected.

Disciple: In this life?

Sri Aurobindo: It depends upon how long you can keep the body. Anyhow, it is perfectly possible that we may be able to make a start and it will go on gradually developing in man.

Disciple: Will it be perfected in the same life?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, it depends upon how long you can keep the body. Even if we don't succeed in perfecting it, but establish it in the physical, then in time it will unfold all the degrees of the Supermind and there is no reason to suppose that it will not manifest even higher degrees than the Supermind — manifest not equally in all, of course.

♊

9 JULY 1926

Disciple: In a case like that of X where the individual himself is averse to free himself from possession, would he be able to get rid of it by suicide? Is suicide bad in such a case?

Sri Aurobindo: I don't think that is the way out. Generally these ideas of suicide come from the hostile world.

Disciple: Why do the hostiles give this suggestion of suicide?

Sri Aurobindo: Because they are satisfied with the Bhoga and they leave the body with the mechanical madness behind, or they may destroy the body.

Disciple: What would be the effect of this kind of possession on X's future life? Will there be any weakness tending to subject him to the same influence?

Sri Aurobindo: It is very difficult to say; but, I suppose, it

depends upon how for the psychic being withdraws from the movement. If the psychic being can reject it completely and cut itself away from this vital personality that has brought about this fall, in that case the vital personality would be left to its own fate. It may either disintegrate or go into animal births and sink lower or be incorporated in the Asuric plane. But it would not be any longer a part of him. Then the psychic being would have to build another vital and another physical being for itself and it may take several lives. If he were not possessed as he is, and if he could live like a normal man in this life, what he has done before might serve as a basis for his future evolution. But now he has to regain what he has lost. But supposing that the psychic being is not able to throw away this personality in him, then he may go on repeating the double movement and one can't say to what it may lead.

It is better for his spiritual evolution that this crash has come to him; for, if he had remained sane and allowed this force to work through him and himself taken enjoyment of it like Y, or become a big Swami and had disciples etc., then there would have been very little chance to recover from it.

Disciple: Would he be able to reject this personality in this life?

Sri Aurobindo: It is apparent that he can't reject it in this life. It is a very serious defeat for the soul and it seems now this personality is a part of the composition of his nature and he cannot get rid of it.

But the psychic being may in a future life be able to recover the lost ground by building a vital and a physical which would be better than they are now.

II

10 JULY 1926

Disciple: K says, "I will stay in a room by the side of the graveyard and inform me if Sri Aurobindo ever feels compassion for me."

Sri Aurobindo: The compassion is to be measured by the distance — the farther he remains there is a chance for more compassion. (*Laughter*)

Disciple: As there are forces that are hostile in Yoga, are there not forces also that help Yoga? What is their nature?

Sri Aurobindo: It depends upon the Yoga you are practising.

Disciple: It means there *are* forces that help in our Yoga.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, there are forces that help us, not directly but from behind. You can say they are the Devas, they help from behind and they work under the Higher Force which we are calling down. In our Yoga we can't take their help completely because the help that is given by them, though considerable at certain stages is, after all, conditional. There are beings that are in sympathy with this effort we are making because they stand to profit by our Yoga. They would be prepared to help in proportion to the advantage they derive and to the extent to which you fulfil their conditions.

It may also happen that when you try to go beyond them, they may prove to be obstacles in your progress. For instance, they help you if you give them worship. Now, in this Yoga our aspiration being for the highest Truth, we cannot give our entire worship to anything but the Truth, and it is the Truth and the power of Truth on which we mainly rely for help.

Disciple: Axe there forces that help on all the planes?

Sri Aurobindo: Hostile attacks are direct and so you feel them more; the help that is given is from behind.

Disciple: Is the help given by these forces mental in its nature?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. Generally the help is from the mental and the vital planes and we cannot take it because the help is always conditional.

By the way I was talking to the Mother about the story that has appeared in *New India* about the awakening of memory of previous birth in a child two and a half years old. She gave another instance of a similar case that is authentic. It occurred in her own family. She has a brother who is a cultured, intelligent man who does not believe in rebirth or any of these things. He has a daughter. Once, between the age of three and four years, when she was being given a bath by her father she closed her eyes and began to sing a queer tune. Her father asked her what was the tune she was singing. She replied with her eyes half-closed: "I used to play this tune when I was a shepherdess on the Paros." Now, none in the family had ever talked to her about the Paros [*in Greece*] or anything else. The only ones who could talk were her father and mother, for the servant in the house was an idiot. It stopped with that one memory and did not go any further; but it is clear that it was something that came upon her. If a child is grown up it comes as an imagination.

So this story adds weight to the possibility of the child remembering its previous birth. It is necessary that every case must be well authenticated.

96

6 AUGUST 1926

Disciple: Yesterday there was some talk about the distinction between feelings and emotions. Emotions are those feelings which require the process of thought.

Sri Aurobindo: Your distinction is at least fifty-year-old psychology! Nowadays they don't make any distinction. Formerly,

they used to lay stress on mental classification, they used to subdivide and analyse all mental functions. But nowadays they deal, or try to deal at any rate, with the fundamentals. And so they now say that 'feelings' and 'emotions' used in the ordinary sense are the same thing. If you use 'feelings' in the wider sense it may include 'emotions'. But that is not the sense in which it is ordinarily used.

Disciple: I did not mean to say that there is any absolute distinction between them. I only referred to the practical distinction. For instance, when I say "I feel hungry" I do not mean the same kind of feeling as a higher emotion.

Sri Aurobindo: Really speaking, hunger is not a 'feeling'. You can say it is a kind of sensation which creates the feeling of hunger in your vital and physico-vital being corresponding to some 'need' in the physical.

Disciple: But take patriotism, for instance, we can't feel 'patriotic' unless we have the necessary mental development or enlargement.

Sri Aurobindo: I don't admit that. Even dogs have some sort of 'patriotism'. What man has done is that he has woven a lot of things round all the animal impulses of nature. Ordinarily, what men call patriotism is nothing more than the instinct of the herd. The bees and the ants are also patriotic, they fight for preserving the herd and there also the individuals sacrifice their lives in order that the community may live.

Disciple: Only, they do it without delivering lectures! (*Laughter*)

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, and without proclaiming aloud that they are the highest in the scale of creation because they do it. It is the same animal nature; what happens in man's case is that he raises it up to the mental level and there weaves all kinds of things around it — thoughts, emotions, ideals, etc. and they justify to his mind the vital-animal nature.

Disciple: The Gita says *dhyāyato viṣayān... saṅgaḥ* — by thinking about objects of enjoyment attachment for them is born. There it is clear that attachment is due to thinking.

Sri Aurobindo: I don't think that the Gita, strictly speaking, is dealing with the origin of emotions in that couplet. It merely tries to show that when the mind "runs after" and "dwells upon" something, it gets attachment. But it does not mean that thought precedes emotions always.

Disciple: Sometimes a connection is established between a vital desire and thought.

Sri Aurobindo: That always happens. For instance, certain desires are accompanied by certain thought-movements. And so, when the same thought-movement takes place, it reciprocally awakens corresponding desires or emotions. But that is due to association. It does not mean that the thought creates the movement in the emotions.

Disciple: But if I think about certain events I can reproduce the emotion which I felt in the past.

Sri Aurobindo: That is quite another matter. It is recalling by memory. I could even reproduce illness in the body by thinking of it! It does not mean thinking is responsible for it.

As I said, most of the things which man delights in are not much different from those which animals delight in. We have inherited and brought into our human life much of the animal nature almost intact. All that you call emotions are, really speaking, vital in their origin; and, as I have already told you, man has simply woven a web round them. Animals also have the same vital feelings, emotions and even thoughts. But in man they work in a different way, because he is a mental being. Man raises up all these things and forms what I call the 'vital mind' or what you call 'emotions'. Emotions according to my classification are the vital part of the mind. Man simply has raised up the animal's vital impulses and

tried to mentalise them. The result has been what I call "weaving a web round" them. All these things therefore appear justifiable to him by his reasoning.

Disciple: I raised the question in order to understand the distinction between the mental, the vital, and the physical.

Sri Aurobindo: I make a distinction between the mental-vital and the vital proper.

Disciple: What is the vital proper?

Sri Aurobindo: The vital being is that which is concerned directly with life. You can call it 'life-force', and all the movements connected with the life-force belong to the vital being. The fundamental working of the vital being is that it takes the form of desire — the desire for objects, for possession, lust, ambition and, generally speaking, all *ṣaḍ ripus* — the six inimical tendencies — belong to the vital plane. This wrong form of the vital movement has a Truth behind it which assumes this wrong form because of Ignorance. The vital being is, really speaking, an instrument, and must be used as an instrument of the Jiva, the Central Being. It is a means of effectuation in life. In the Ignorance it takes the form of desire to effectuate itself; but in the Higher Knowledge it becomes sheer will, the power of effectuation without straining of desire, etc.

Man simply raises these vital movements, which belong equally to the animal nature, to the mind. That is all. He deludes himself into thinking that when he has connected some emotion with the vital movement, it has become pure and when his mind can give a rational explanation of it, he has got a justification to go on with the vital play. In fact, that is the way in which these vital forces have kept their hold upon man. Take, for instance, what man ordinarily calls 'love'. It is primarily nothing else but the vital impulse which he can call the sex-impulse. It is everywhere in nature. Man mixes it with a certain movement of emotion and calls it love and thinks everything is justified by it.

Disciple: What is the physical?

Sri Aurobindo: What do you understand by the physical?

Disciple: We mean by it material objects without life and mind.

Sri Aurobindo: That is not quite correct, because your body is material and yet it has got life and mind. In the physical itself you have got life and mind; only, they are involved. But if you can grow conscious on the physical plane you will find that there is life and even mind in the cells of the body. Of course, the life and mind we find in the physical world are not the same as we find on the vital or the mental plane. But you can't deny that there is mind in it. It is that which performs the mechanical operations of the body with such precision. The physical mind is the mind which sees only the physical and material aspect of things and refuses to see any other aspect.

Disciple: That is the ordinary mind.

Sri Aurobindo: Most minds are nothing else than that.

Disciple: What should a man do to raise himself from mind to Supermind?

Sri Aurobindo: The first thing one has to do is to know the nature of the being, and then he must turn to something higher than the mind for the attainment of the Truth. The mind can give some knowledge about it, but it cannot give the complete knowledge nor can it effect the transformation.

Disciple: You said just now that man has the animal nature in him for the most part. The European philosophers make an exaggerated statement of the same truth. They say the vital is at the root of everything in humanity, and they seem to idolise it.

Sri Aurobindo: How do you mean? Man is an animal, or rather, there is the animal in man.

Disciple: These thinkers seem to deny the existence of anything higher in man. They almost seem to say: "As man is an animal, it is

good for him to be a conscious and an efficient animal, and he must try to be an efficient nothing else." In Bernard Shaw we find that insistence.

Sri Aurobindo: But Shaw does not say that there is nothing higher than the animal nature in man! Shaw is an acute thinker. He refuses to be deceived into the belief of the greatness of man. He says that man must rise higher.

But it is one thing to have an idea of rising higher and quite another thing to believe that man is a highly evolved being. One of the most fundamental requisites for the search of the Truth is a critical reason, almost a cynical mind, which tears off the mask and refuses to accept current ideas, thoughts and opinions. It is a kind of solvent. Man must have the courage to see the Truth as it is without any deception about it. Shaw has got that critical mind to a great extent and we find the same in Anatole France.

The second thing that a man must have in order to reach the Truth is the aspiration for a Truth higher than what has been attained. He must watch all ideals, principles and truths and see which are possible and how far each ideal can be realised; and, most important of all, he must know the conditions required for the fulfilment of such an ideal.

Disciple: If the Supramental Power is working, then why do so many difficulties from outside come to a sadhak like X?

Sri Aurobindo: There are hostile powers that do not want the manifestation of this Higher Power. The more you progress the more they become furious and try to attack you. Secondly, it is not the highest Supramental Power itself that is working in the beginning. It presses down upon the mind and through the movement of the Higher Mind it shows the ignorance and the imperfections.

Disciple: How are we to get rid of these difficulties?

Sri Aurobindo: First of all, you have to remain calm; that is,

establish perfect equality of temperament, and not be moved by them. Whenever a movement of ignorance or imperfection comes you have to watch and see from where it comes: whether from without or from inside your nature. Then you have to refer it to the Higher Knowledge. You will find the Light. But in the beginning it will be mixed up with your mental movements. In the light of that knowledge you have to reject what is false and give consent only to the highest movement. As you progress more and more you will find a higher light and a higher power which shows the way of meeting these forces and of mastering them.

Ultimately, when you have got the highest movement, you become too strong for the difficulties. Of course, the higher protection is given to you. But the first condition for getting the protection is that one should constantly open oneself to the Higher Power. Secondly, one must have a firm resolution and sincerity. Thirdly, a complete faith in the protection of the Higher Power.

Disciple: Do these difficulties come as a trial?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, from a higher standpoint you can look upon them as tests of your progress in Yoga. They show you your weak points and you can derive benefit out of them if you take them in the right spirit.

Disciple: Suppose a yogi conquers the difficulties, would it mean a universal conquest for him?

Sri Aurobindo: First of all you have to conquer them in yourself. Then, in your surroundings; that is, in those who will come within your influence and at last, with the sanction of the Divine, you can also influence events. For instance, there is no reason why a yogi should not be able to influence events in Russia or America, sitting in his chair. He can also put his power behind men who are in the field and thus change the course of events.

Disciple: Does the yogi work upon world-forces?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, he can — by putting his influence upon

them to change their course.

Disciple: Have the world-forces knowledge of the Truth?

Sri Aurobindo: No. They are only forces and want to realise themselves. It is a way of speaking when one says, "A yogi's power is working." All power is Divine Power and the individual is merely a *point d'appui*, point of support, and he knows it all the time that the Divine Power is working.

He can also use it egoistically and produce great effects but in proportion as it is limited by his ego or desire, it becomes imperfect and limited in potency.

ଓ

13 AUGUST 1926

Disciple: I want to know the distinction between the various psychological parts of the being:

1. The mental — mental proper, mental vital, and mental physical.
2. The vital — vital mental (desire-mind), vital proper, and vital physical or physico-vital.
3. The physical — physical mental, physical vital, and physical proper.

Sri Aurobindo: It is difficult to put the distinction in words and, even if one could, it would be very inadequate and partial. If you take the mental being of man you will find that there is what may be called the pure mental part of it, which is high above the head and communicates through the brain with the physical life. It is the 'thinking mind'. It is concerned chiefly with reasoning, creations of mental forms and the activity of the mental will.

Then there are the emotions and sensations which are not really

mental in their origin and stuff; they rise from the vital being and, coming up into the mind, they take up mental forms — mental emotions and mental sensations. That I call the mental-vital. According to some, it is purely vital.

And from the head to the throat, the centre of speech, so to say, you have the mental being.

Disciple: What is meant by *buddhi*?

Sri Aurobindo: Buddhi is what I call the pure mind. It combines the intellect and the will. It is the faculty of thinking and reflection. It reasons. It tries to answer the questions, "What is the truth? What is it that I must do?" and also, "How must I do it?" And when this pure mental faculty develops we find that it has a certain power of perception and mental vision. It creates forms and speech.

Disciple: To what does the centre of speech belong?

Sri Aurobindo: The centre of speech is at the root of the throat and speech is, really speaking, a mental faculty. It tries to communicate the result of thinking and reasoning through the medium of speech. It serves as an expression of thought, and it is also used by the emotions and the vital being for their expression. First they go up from the lower parts and express themselves through speech. But speech is essentially a mental faculty.

Disciple: What is *manas*? What is the difference between Buddhi and Manas?

Sri Aurobindo: When we use Manas in the general and wider sense it means the mind, meaning the whole mental activity — reflection, emotion and mental sensation, all taken together. But when we use Manas in Philosophy we mean by it the sense-mind. It is located near the heart. For instance, sometimes when people get presentiments they get it in the sense-mind. That is why in the Upanishads Manas is called the sixth sense, while Buddhi generally means the intelligence with the will. It finds out the Truth or tries to find it out and then decides to act according to it.

Then there is the mental-physical which is not the same thing as the physical mind. It is not this which is behind matter and supports it. It is certain habitual, mental movements repeating themselves without any act of pure reasoning. Even if there is reasoning in it, it is mechanical. It goes on moving in its round even when the other parts of the mind are not conscious of it. It goes on mechanically repeating old ideas and sanskaras etc. There is neither vital urge in it, nor any creative activity of the mind proper.

Disciple: On each of the three planes — mental, vital and physical — I suppose there is also an element of the Supermind. What is it that corresponds to the Supermind in the mental being?

Sri Aurobindo: Supermind on the mental level is Intuition. It is not pure Supermind. It is the mental form of it.

Then there is the vital being from the navel and below it, or, according to some, from the heart down to the navel. In its own nature it is life-movement or force trying to effectuate itself in life. Its crudest form is 'desire'. In feet, it is force trying to possess and enjoy. It lays hold on objects and puts its own stamp upon them. It lays hold on things for possession and enjoyment. It is that which creates in man ambition, lust, greed for money, for power, all egoistic forms of desire, etc. Well, that crude form is very useful for perpetuating life in Nature.

It is the vital being in man which wants to do this or to do that. It is busy trying to throw itself out. That is the essential vital nature. And behind it is the vital mind, which creates thought-forms that are different from mental thought-forms. They go out straight from the vital being and not from the mind. The vital mind accompanies the vital movements, knows them and expresses them in speech and mental forms, but it does not reason. It thinks and plans even as the pure mind does, but it thinks and plans in another way. It is a mind that stands apart and arranges how to realise the impulse.

Disciple: But then it is not true thought, it is false.

Sri Aurobindo: It is not false. Only, it is vital thought and not mental. For instance, when Mussolini says, "Italy shall have a place under the sun," it is not a mental thought, it is a vital thought.

Disciple: Is it not an emotion?

Sri Aurobindo: It is not primarily an emotion. It is a thought straight from his vital ego. Then it may be accompanied by the emotion of patriotism in him and he may even ask his reason to find a justification for it. He may tell his Buddhi: "Well, I have said such and such a thing. Now you try and find out a reason for my saying so and also why it is true."

Disciple: Then what is the dynamic mind?

Sri Aurobindo: The dynamic mind is the will, while the vital mind is the desire-mind. It desires the vital urge without any reasoning. As I said, when the mind works, it first tries to answer the question, "What is the truth? And what is it that I must do?" And then it does not stop there, it also answers, "How am I to do it?" That part is the will. It also plans and arranges, but in a different way. The dynamic mind is the will that tries to carry out the decisions of the intellect.

Then you have got the physico-vital, that is, the physical part of the vital being. It is necessary in order to realise the vital impulses on the physical plane. It is that which is concerned mainly with passing events and transitory movements. It is that which is irritated over trifles, easily upset. It gets exhilaration of joy very soon, and is also very soon depressed. It is a restless part concerned with passing things and makes one restless. The vital may have the necessary urge, but if this physical part is not ready one cant realise it on this plane.

All this forms the vital being. It is a very necessary part for the full development of the being. In fact, it is the vital which supports the mind in its upward movement — at least, it should, because without it the mind would not be able to effectuate itself in life. It

might remain only with ideals, ideas and principles.

Disciple: That is to say, the vital must consent to the mental ideas.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, because without it nothing can be accomplished.

Disciple: But then, is it the mental which draws out the vital force or the vital which calls forth the mental energy?

Sri Aurobindo: It depends upon what is first in the field. It may be the mental or the vital in different individuals.

Disciple: So that if it supports the mind then there is every chance of the mind succeeding?

Sri Aurobindo: Not necessarily. The vital may consent to and support the mental being, but it may not have the necessary strength to carry out the ideas in life.

Disciple: Which is the supramental element in the vital being?

Sri Aurobindo: The supramental in the vital is, you can say, vital intuitions and inspired impulsions and inspirations. It is something that comes down from above direct to the vital being — not necessarily touching the mind. It is that which gives correct intuitions as to what is to be done. There are persons — not necessarily yogis — who, without reasoning or thinking, at once find out the right thing to be done.

All men of genius have got that capacity — a sort of half-supramentalised vital being, which makes them always do the right thing, the thing that ought to be done. They don't commit mistakes in their actions. Generally they don't reason. In fact they can't give reasons. But yet they do the right thing and succeed.

As I said, the vital being is a very necessary part of the being. When it is changed it becomes an instrument in the hands of the Higher Power. Then there is no longer desire but the Higher Force which acts through it. In order that it may be able to do it, it has to

open itself to the Truth above the mind.

Disciple: What is *prāṇa*?

Sri Anrobindo: Prana is the basic stuff of consciousness according to the old phraseology. It is that which is behind all the movements of the being here. It is different from *citta* which is the higher consciousness. There is, for instance, *prāṇa ākāśa* and *citta ākāśa.*

Then there is the physical being. There you have the physical mind, which all have got. It observes and accepts the physical things around us but does not go beyond them. It accepts them as they are, and though we can't say it 'thinks' about them, yet it is that which arranges them in a sort of way. It hardly reasons except when acting in conjunction with higher faculties. It is, you may say, the farthest end, just like the point of a pen, which is necessary for the work of the mental being. When I take up a pen and my hand begins to write something upon paper without, of course, thinking anything about it — say, some word or name — it is the physical mind that is doing it.

Then there is the vital-physical or physico-vital. It is the vital moving in the physical being. It is most important to us because it is that which makes the different organs act: the functions of the physical being are regulated by it. It is that which gives health and strength to the body. It is for this reason that the Upanishads speak of *prāṇas* —vital breaths — moving in the system. They are most important because they form as it were the nerve-ends of the higher faculties. You can do nothing well if they do not respond to the higher faculties, to the inner being. For instance, if you are a musician, you may have the best music within you, but if your fingers do not act properly you can't succeed. They form, as it were, the farthest end of the inner being through which the inner being expresses itself on the physical plane. It is just like the pen through which the thought finds expression.

It is also the reason why the brain is considered as the most important part of the body. Not because it creates thought but just because it forms the connecting link by which thought can find expression here. It is the apparatus which receives the higher working.

Disciple: Painting also is in the same difficulty as music.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, even poetry. There are people who get fine poetry in the mind, but the moment they take up the pen nothing comes.

Disciple: That is what happens to K. He says he has many things to write but as soon as he takes up his pen, only the pen and ink remain. (Laughter)

Sri Aurobindo: And then there is the physical proper, the material part. It is the consciousness of the body, you can say, almost the 'flesh consciousness'. It is a consciousness even in the cells of the body.

The supermind working in the physical is rather difficult to speak about. One can hint at it. You can say it is something in the very physical cells which makes them do precisely the thing that is necessary for the body. Because it is there, the body, for instance, knows what it should eat. If left free it would tell you what it requires and what it does not. For instance, you take up an object and, without any mental action or otherwise, you know its weight, straight as it were, from the physical. But most civilised men have lost that capacity. Men turned too much to the mental and vital faculties that were rising in them. Generally, the vital interferes too much with its desire for food and says, "I want that," and "I like this," "I like that." And the mind also, with its ideas, "It is good to take this food," and "This contains this, therefore it is good." But the physical consciousness if left free, knows what it needs. The body has no desires, it has needs, and it knows what it needs.

Disciple: Can men get back that lost faculty?

Sri Aurobindo: It is difficult to get it back in its entirety, but we can recover it to a great extent. In this respect we have lost many of the faculties of primitive men.

Disciple: There is something in medical science which supports the view. You gave out now that there is a consciousness in the cells. It is found that when food is taken, it is absorbed by the cells when the substance in the stomach is in a certain condition. It is then that the nutritive elements are absorbed by the system to the greatest extent. Now, when a poison is taken and even when the conditions for its absorption are there ready, it is found that the cells of the body reject the poison; that is, they don't absorb the poison. It is called selective absorption. It, as it were, knows and refuses to take a poison.

Sri Aurobindo: Oh, yes.

Disciple: The animals, for example, know what they ought not to take.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. That is the physical consciousness. They sometimes know through the smell. We find in man that as the mind has grown at the expense of the vital being, so also it has done at the expense of certain capacities of the physical being.

Of course one can argue that if man had not stressed his mental being so much, he would not have tried to find out the truth about these things. The mind would have remained idle. But the mind need not have remained like that. The mind is a consciousness turning back upon itself and looking down from above at the vital and physical. The mind could have taken the evidence of the materials which the vital and the physical beings had to offer and then gone further on with them, trying to understand them, instead of losing those faculties.

Disciple: To what plane does aesthetic creation belong?

Sri Aurobindo: It depends upon different people. Generally it belongs to the vital plane. But there are differences. For instance,

style for its own sake, I mean the beauty of poetic style — beauty of language, rhythm, etc. — all that belongs to the vital plane. But aesthetic creation can be on every plane. Originally, all that comes from the Ananda plane.

Disciple: From what plane did K's letter of today come?

Disciple: Is it vital beauty?

Sri Aurobindo: It is vital imagination. It is something working in its own way without regard to facts. If the man is powerful he can make his imagination realise itself.

Disciple: Is that what we call a dreamer?

Sri Aurobindo: Dreams? Dreams belong to all planes and not to one.

Disciple: I mean people who can't realise their ideas and go on imagining things.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. Idealists who have not got the vital force to put their ideals into life and make them effective.

Disciple: What is memory? Is it a mental faculty?

Sri Aurobindo: Memory is everywhere. All that transpires, of which one may be conscious or not, is recorded in the Prana, the basic stuff of consciousness. But one remembers only that which one has attentively heard and fixed in his mind. But generally these impressions are received by the Prana and immediately they sink into the subconscious, or the subliminal consciousness, or whatever you like to call it.

There is the recorded instance of the servant girl of a famous French scholar of Hebrew. She used to hear, while at work, her master repeating the Bible in Hebrew. To her it was meaningless gibberish. Then when she was in an abnormal condition she repeated her masters recitation exactly, with the same accents and without a mistake. She knew nothing of the language — that is, evidently the mind did not understand anything of it. But all the

time it was being recorded in the subconscious being. Even the soles of our feet have got a memory of their own.

We have divided and analysed these functions but it is, like all analyses, convenient only for understanding; things in reality are not so cut-and-dry. They don't work separately. There is a great deal of action and interaction among them and the being is much more complex in its actual working than may be supposed from this analysis.

For instance, we have divided the being into the mental, vital and physical. But when we speak of the mental, we take the mind working on its own plane, so to say. But all the parts are interconnected and the mind is working from above right down to the lowest plane of consciousness; and so it is with every principle. It is only for the convenience of understanding, that we classify them.

Disciple: Do not these movements of nature correspond to the movements in the universe?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. Otherwise they would not be found in the human being.

Disciple: What is pain?

Sri Aurobindo: You mean grief? It is vital in its nature.

ଔ

14 AUGUST 1926

Disciple: Is there any relation between the aesthetic being and the psychic being?

Sri Aurobindo: There is a sense of beauty in the aesthetic being and also there is a sense of beauty in the psychic being. Beyond that there is no necessary relation between the two.

The aesthetic being belongs to the vital plane. If the man is not merely a master of form and line, the aesthetic being sees that the beauty of form expresses something. The aesthetic being sees the beauty of form and line and sees also the beauty of something that is expressed, while the psychic being sees the charm of the soul.

The psychic being has no beauty as it is ordinarily understood. It is rather charm, — an inner beauty, beauty of the soul. But it need not necessarily have beauty of form, — though it may also have that. A man who may have a fine soul may not be physically beautiful.

Disciple: Nobility of soul, must it not express itself in physical beauty?

Sri Aurobindo: That is what should be; but it is not so always in life. A man's soul may be as noble as that of Socrates and he may be as ugly!

Disciple: Children are all and always beautiful.

Sri Aurobindo: In them it is the vital glow.

Disciple: Does psychic beauty consist in colour or line or such other characteristic?

Sri Aurobindo: Psychic beauty does not, or may not, express itself in colour and line like aesthetic beauty. It is something quite apart from them, though it may express itself through them. It is a certain indefinable delicacy and charm.

Disciple: That means psychic beauty has delicacy.

Sri Aurobindo: If you catch at words like that you misinterpret what I say. Vital beauty also has got delicacy. But it is not that. Sometimes a look or a smile expresses not the vital but the psychic beauty. Well, some flowers have got psychic beauty in them: for instance, the jasmine is a very psychic flower.

Disciple: The flowers have beauty but it is something new to learn that they have psychic beauty.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, it is the beauty of the soul of the flower.

Disciple: Soul of the flower!

Sri Aurobindo: I knew it would astound you. You think the flowers have no soul? It is again man's ignorance that makes him think that he is the greatest being in creation. Some dogs have got a much finer psychic than many men!

Would you believe if I were to tell you that there can be a psychic element in the love-making of animals? Take our cat, Big-boy. When he makes love to Bite-bite, he is physical; when he makes love to Baby, he is vital; when he makes love to Mimi, he is emotional and sentimental; and when he makes love to Girly, he is psychic!

Disciple: Then how is it that man is regarded as the highest being in creation?

Sri Aurobindo: He is high because there is in him the possibility of evolving a divine life. You can say also that he is high because he has developed a mind and the mind gives him a chance of conscious evolution. But it does not necessarily follow that because man is a mental being he has used his mind for his evolution. Exactly because he has a mind, man has an infinite capacity to be devilish. He brings to the help of his devil a mind, and the devil himself can't be so bad as man with his mind when he puts it at the service of his vital being.

Disciple: Infinite possibilities! Both ways, divine and devilish!

Sri Aurobindo: It is the egoistic ignorance of man which makes him think he is the highest in creation.

Disciple: But, then, there is the great difference between man's body and the animal's.

Sri Aurobindo: That is all. And even that is not so much as you try to make it out to be. After all, what is the difference between the animal body and the human? If you see carefully, you will see you

have discarded the tail, and instead of walking on four legs you have been using two, and the other two you have changed into hands. There have been slight but very important changes in the brain and some details here and there. You have cast off your fur and horns.

Disciple: Not all men! K has a lot of fur yet. (*Laughter*)

Sri Aurobindo: You see, after all it is not so great a change in the physical as would create a gulf between animal and man! No. All that is human nonsense. Man is great because he can open to something higher and can consciously go beyond the mind and live a divine life upon earth.

Disciple: You said just now that jasmine is a psychic flower — is it so in the shape and colour or in the fragrance or in what?

Sri Aurobindo: No. I do not at all mean that the psychic beauty of the flower is in these external things. It is very difficult to convey the idea of that beauty to the mind.

Disciple: How do you find the rose?

Sri Aurobindo: The rose is strongly vital; the inner soul is lost in the form there.

Disciple: And the lotus?

Sri Aurobindo: The lotus, of course, is a symbolic flower. It represents the opening of the inner being to the higher truth. You can see that the lotus is a mystic flower.

Disciple: In Indian works of art, can you recollect paintings that have a psychic beauty in them?

Sri Aurobindo: I don't remember just now, but I saw some had it, not many. You have seen that picture of Nandalal Bose, *Pathahārā* — Way-lost [*cow*]?

Disciple: Yes.

Sri Aurobindo: There is something of it there, and there was

another picture by Abanindranath, which I now forget. But generally Abanindranath draws his inspiration from the vital plane.

Disciple: Has it nothing to do with mental beauty?

Sri Aurobindo: No. That is why it is difficult to know what is psychic beauty unless you can feel it with your soul. For instance, you come across a passage in a book, and you exclaim: "How fine!" Well, that is mental beauty but that is not psychic beauty. Again, a man's face may show a bright light of intelligence but that is also not psychic beauty: it is due to intelligence.

Disciple: Can a person appreciate psychic beauty without having the psychic being evolved in him?

Sri Aurobindo: What do you mean? There is a psychic being in everybody.

Disciple: But if the psychic being is not strong?

Sri Aurobindo: It may not be strong enough to impress itself upon the mind or the vital being, but it may have psychic feelings and there are persons in whom these psychic feelings have an influence on their lives.

Disciple: How do things of beauty help ones spiritual development?

Sri Aurobindo: That depends upon what you mean by spiritual development. It helps man's growth as everything else does. Cultivation of the sense of beauty refines the temperament. A refined temperament is much more easy to purify than an unrefined one. This is the thing which Gandhi does not realise: that the development of the sense of beauty is as much a part of perfection as anything else. Not only that; if a man has not developed the sense of beauty he would miss the path of approach to the Supreme which is through beauty.

Disciple: You said some time back that the Superman would always look young as at 18.

Sri Aurobindo: Did I say that? I would like to say that he would look ageless, that is to say, his body would carry an impression of agelessnesss.

♍

28 SEPTEMBER 1926

Disciple: What is the characteristic of the Purusha on each plane of being — the physical, the vital and the mental — looking at the world?

Sri Aurobindo: The Purusha looks at the world as Prakriti represents it to be. On the mental plane Prakriti represents thoughts, ideas — in short, all mental movements. On the vital plane Prakriti represents itself as desires — in short, as action of the vital force. On the physical plane it represents itself as the unchangeable law of physical life.

Disciple: When the Purusha separates itself from Prakriti, how is it possible for it to aspire for something higher?

Sri Aurobindo: It is not the Purusha but the Prakriti which has to be made to aspire and made fit. The Purusha is silent, passive, looking at Prakriti.

Disciple: What is the characteristic way of Purusha looking at the world from the Supermind?

Sri Aurobindo: The Supramental Purusha looks at the world as the Truth looks at it.

Disciple: How does the Truth look at the world?

Sri Aurobindo (*with a gesture of hand pointing up*)**:** You get up there and you will see.

Disciple: In the Taittiriya Upanishad the following passage occurs: "Vijnana extends the sacrifice — what is dear is its head;

delight is its right side; great delight, the left side; bliss, the body; Brahman, the lower part, the foundation."

Sri Aurobindo: Here *puccham*, tail, means the end, the basis. It means the basis of Ananda is the Infinite, the Brahman.

Disciple: Further it says: "By that this is filled; faith is its head; Truth of movement the right side; Truth of being the left side; union, the body; the great plane, the lower part, the foundation."

Sri Aurobindo: It means if you want to rise to the Supermind you have to attain the *mahas* — the wide, infinite and universal consciousness which is its basis; *ritam* means Truth of movement; *satyam* is Truth of being; *śraddhā* is the acceptance of the Truth when it is there.

Disciple: When the Truth is there present on the Supramental level, why is Shraddha required?

Sri Aurobindo: Shraddha here means that when you see the Truth, you are ready to accept it. *Yogātmā* means that the lower being has to attain union with the higher being in order to go up to the level higher than the Mind.

Disciple: About the *prāṇamaya* also it speaks and adds that it is fulfilled by it.

Sri Aurobindo: It says that the mental — *manomaya* — is higher than the vital and is fulfilled by it.

Disciple: It also says "*yajñas* is the head; the *rik* is the right side; *sāman* is the left side; command is the soul; *atharva-aṅgirasa* is the end and foundation."

Sri Aurobindo: *Rik* means the intuitive movement in the mind; *sāman* is the rhythm of the movement and harmony. *Atharva* means the effective action of the physical plane. *Aṅgirasa*, in the Veda at least, means the power of Agni which releases the cows, the Light, from the cave of darkness of the *pāṇis* with the help of the Word and Indra and the other gods.

Disciple: There is a description of the vital and its function.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, "*vyāna* is the right side; *apāna* is the left side; *ākāśa* is *ātmā*." It may refer to the vital ether and *pṛthivī puccham pratiṣṭhā* clearly means that the vital is based on and looks from above upon the physical.

Disciple: Does the Christian Trinity correspond to Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva?

Sri Aurobindo: No. The Indian trinity refers to cosmic powers which preside over certain movements in the universe. The 'Son' in the Christian Trinity means perhaps the Divine in man. The 'Holy Ghost' symbolises the Divine Consciousness.

♍

3 OCTOBER 1926

Sri Aurobindo: True humility is when you are ready to admit your own defects for which, again, you need not feel *adhama* — fallen. You feel that you have all the defects that are in universal nature and that you are not personally superior to anyone. You need not keep this feeling when the defects are gone and go on repeating "I am nothing, let me be full of sin," — also one should not be swollen-headed about it. Really speaking, it is absence of arrogance — humility is not a good word.

Disciple: Has the sense of humour a place in spiritual perfection?

Sri Aurobindo: If the *siddha* never laughs it is an imperfection.

(*incomplete*)

ON MOVEMENTS

30 APRIL 1923

The Arunachal Mission of Bengal wrote a letter to Sri Aurobindo. There is going to be a world-peace organ of the Mission. The founder has been rendering spiritual help to all the movements of peace under its inspiration. Somebody is working in Rome on behalf of the Mission.

Disciple: There are according to newspaper reports fourteen Avatars in Bengal!

Sri Aurobindo: R had suggested a committee of all the Avatars. It is a nice idea, no doubt, but it may not turn out to be peaceful! (*Laughter*)

Disciple: He wanted to convert the *Idée Nouvelle* activities into something like an Indian academy.

Disciple: He also wanted to bring in Bahaism. His idea was something like four Lloyd Georges working together!

Disciple: Some say that the world war was brought about by Dayanand Thakur.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, for world-peace! (*Laughter*)

♓

5 APRIL 1924

A letter from an American lady who is a preacher of Bahaism, was read out.

Sri Aurobindo: Do you know about the man who started Bahaism?

Disciple: I do not know, but it was Baha Ullah perhaps who started it.

Sri Aurobindo: It seems he was an ignorant man in the beginning, but he had a vital being which received the Light — not perhaps the very Highest but a mental Light. And it is with that force that he created Bahaism. He used to see the Light descend on him when he was in meditation.

He had also, in addition, the power of the *word* which is regarded as the sign of a prophet. The words may not be something extraordinary in themselves, but they carry a certain power in them. He had also a remarkable power of telepathy which he used when he was imprisoned and he used to direct his disciples from the prison.

He had a great power of malediction, a power of cursing, and many of his curses came true. He caused certain letters to be written to the ruling monarchs of the time from his prison, and it is said that the manner in which each one received his message was reported to him. He cursed the Sultan of Turkey saying that Turkey would be ruined and his throne would be destroyed. Emperor Napoleon III also did not receive the message well and he was also cursed. The Shah of Persia caused the messenger to be killed. I don't know what Baha Ullah said with regard to him.

Some of his prophecies also have come true.

Disciple: Is it possible that one man's curse should prove true for a nation?

Sri Aurobindo: There is no reason why it should not. Do you think that one can't curse anybody? Especially, if there is a strong support of a vital being, it would be effective.

Disciple: In that case the whole nation may be destroyed.

Sri Aurobindo: It may be destroyed, if that is destined. He cursed in the same way as Mahomed did.

Disciple: The American lady says that Bahaism has taken a deep root in America.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, it is true and there are some followers in France also.

Disciple: All sorts of things seem to go on well in the U.S.A. There is Vedanta, Theosophy, Bahaism and what not.

Sri Aurobindo: Anything goes well in America, if only you know how to do it.

Disciple: Swami X seems to have spoiled the chance of Vedanta. Otherwise, it would be going on well.

Sri Aurobindo: Vedanta is too abstract for the ordinary mind. It was the personality of Vivekananda that gave the drive.

But this Bahaism is just what suits the common mind. There are now two sects run by Baha Ullahs two sons. Abdul Baha is the younger one. He has some vital force from his father and he used to see some kind of Light in meditation and so he began to think of himself as the incarnation of the Light on earth, and whoever was received in the fold was supposed to be influenced by it. Bahaism has included certain mental concepts also, e.g., toleration, universal brotherhood, equality of man and woman, etc. The other day he included Buddhism also, though he seems to know nothing about it. He has about eleven million followers, of which two million are in Europe.

If the Mahomedans get a religion of that sort it is much better than what they are having now.

Disciple: You said the other day that Tailanga Swami's remaining in water of the Ganges for several days does not constitute perfection of the physical. What is the notion of perfection implied in the physical being's getting supramentalised?

Sri Aurobindo (*waving his hands in the air*)**:** I have no idea. (*Laughter*)

It is yet to be done. All I can say is that it would be something which would have in it the two fundamental laws of the Supermind: Truth and Harmony.

Disciple: Would the Ashta Siddhis — the eight supernatural powers, be attained by one who attains the Supramentalisation of the physical?

Sri Aurobindo: You mean his hands and feet etc. can be detached miraculously?

Disciple: Invulnerability, for instance.

Sri Aurobindo: I don't know; wait and see. The best thing is when you have got the Siddhi to get someone to beat you to find out whether you have become invulnerable or not. *(Laughter)*

A question regarding survival after death and projection of the being to another place came in.

Disciple: It seems that Sister Nivedita used to feel the presence of Vivekananda in the place where she lived.

Sri Aurobindo: That may be the presence of the disembodied person.

Disciple: There is an idea that Swami X could appear simultaneously at three places.

Sri Aurobindo: I think it requires proof.

Disciple: Why, our friend A saw B in Calcutta and he would not believe me when I told him he was not there — a fact which I knew to be true.

Disciple: One can easily prove that you were present at Bhavanipore, Chittagong and Pondicherry simultaneously!

Sri Aurobindo: You see, you have in this example the explanation of how the Swami appeared at three places! (*Laughter*)

Disciple: It may be only the psychic presence.

Sri Aurobindo: That is quite another thing; it is possible, even thought-formation and psycho-vital formation are possible.

Disciple: Vivekananda came to Shashi Maharaj after leaving his body and told him "Shashi! I have spat out my body."

Sri Aurobindo: That is quite possible and even common — to make the presence of the disembodied spirit felt. It occurs in many cases, especially in the days immediately after death. The spirit comes in dreams and visions also. Usually, in ordinary cases it is for a short time, but in certain cases it may be much longer.

Disciple: Ramakrishna used to appear at many places. Hriday, his nephew, asked him to be present at the time of *ārati* — waving of lights — at the *Durgā Pūjā* which he did in his village far from Calcutta. He invariably saw him at the time and Ramakrishna used to go into a trance at Calcutta where he lived.

Sri Aurobindo: That phenomenon is not so unusual. It is the conscious use on both the sides of a power which is unconsciously possessed by most men — the power to project oneself. In this case the power to project even the vital being seems to be active, which is unusual. There was the capacity to receive on one side and conscious effort on the other.

Disciple: I had a talk with a North Indian disciple who seems to think that a yogi who has attained Knowledge must know everything.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, your friend from Palanpur who saw me today wants me to answer all his puzzles and questions. You can tell him that one can know a thing best by identity; so that if he becomes one with the ass he can know everything about it! You have in yoga to know the One by knowing which everything would be known. What is the use of knowing all the details? Even God does not know everything directly; he manages the affair through his deputies.

Disciple: People have an attraction for miracles and Siddhis.

Ramakrishna used to relate a story about these Siddhis. A man had attained *prākāmya* — the power to obtain whatever he wished. One day he just got the fear: "Suppose a tiger comes!" And the tiger actually came and ate him up! (*Laughter*)

Disciple: Why did he not suppose that after coming the tiger became a lamb?

Disciple: There was no time to suppose anything further. (*Laughter*)

≈

6 MARCH 1926

There was a reference to a 'divine marriage' that was to be celebrated at Chandernagore. A letter and a photograph were sent for Sri Aurobindo's approval.

Sri Aurobindo: I refuse to have anything to do with the matter. It is the girl who must choose her husband, and not I.

I can only add that marriages, generally, are not divine; and when they are divine no arrangements are necessary.

Disciple: Some people are trying to drag these things into the Supermind; but they must themselves get into the Supermind before they can drag others into it.

Sri Aurobindo: If they were in the Supramental, then the question would not arise, as they would never try to drag anyone into it.

Disciple: Nowadays the Chittagong people have left off writing letters.

Disciple: Except K who sent an unpaid letter which I refused to accept without asking you.

Sri Aurobindo: You did well. We cannot afford to pay two annas to have the pleasure of reading K's letter. Money is too precious nowadays.

(*After some time*) At times I wonder why at all I thought of bringing down the Supermind into this mass of idiots!

Disciple: Do you think it was an evil day?

Sri Aurobindo: No; but wherever you may go, whatever you may do, the idiots will be there. You see, when there is a big dinner-party some are invited and they come, others are not invited and yet they come, and others force themselves into the party! (*Laughter*)

I am really surprised why these people come to me. If they went to X they could easily find sanction for the 'divine marriage' or they could go to Y who is now doing *kāma*!

Disciple: Y did *dharma* and *artha*, now they are doing *kāma*, and finally there will be *mokṣa*!

Disciple: There is an article in the Vivekananda Number where this theory of *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* and *mokṣa* is expounded: it is all in the *agnimoyi* — fiery — language. I don't know if they believe that people would accept these ideas.

Sri Aurobindo: Generally, people who have no brains would be carried away by the high-sounding 'fiery' language; they do not want thought. Such language would always carry away empty-headed fools. Some people have a knack of using high-sounding words; once I listened to Surendra Nath Banerji for half an hour and I found no thought there — it was all words.

Disciple: But they, the words, carry the audience all right!

Sri Aurobindo: Oh yes, of course; what people require is some kind of vital emotion — they do not require thought. People get tired of listening to thoughts.

Disciple: Is there no thought in oratory? Is it only an art?

Sri Aurobindo: Not so; but even if there is thought you have to

dilute it very much and throw it into the emotional vital.

Disciple: But they say that Surendra Nath was Burke and Sheridan combined in his oratorical powers.

Sri Aurobindo: He may be like Sheridan, I do not know. Sheridan was a great orator, he never had to think for making a speech. But he was not like Burke. Burke *is* thought, every sentence of his is weighed with thought. Though he was a great orator he did not produce as much effect on others.

≈

12 MARCH 1926

Reference was made to Bhawanipore centre from where the sadhaks had not been writing anything for some time.

Disciple: X was never in the habit of writing even before. His theory was that everything will happen at the proper time without any effort. Just as sleep comes and you can't stop it, so also Siddhi of Yoga comes on and you can't stop it.

Sri Aurobindo: It is not so simple as that. Yoga does not bring about sleep, I hope.

Disciple: Probably what he means is that sleep cannot be controlled; so also Sadhana.

Sri Aurobindo: But in sleep there is no question of 'getting' something. It is a question of stopping something. Besides sleep comes to you naturally, while Yoga does not. It may seem sometimes that the first awakening comes without any effort on your part, but afterwards it is all a slow working out.

Disciple: Perhaps they rely upon Ramakrishna's saying that if you light a single matchstick in a dark room everything in it is lighted up.

Sri Aurobindo: And then what happens next?

Disciple: Nothing. Everything is lighted up and the darkness vanishes.

Sri Aurobindo: No, the matchstick goes out.

Disciple: You take the simile too literally.

Sri Aurobindo: The simile itself is not correct. First of all the matchstick does not get lighted of itself; you have to light it. So it does not agree with X's idea that Yoga would be done by itself. Secondly, the matchstick lights up a small area and there are plenty of dark corners in the room. Thirdly, the match goes out very soon.

Disciple: So the simile fells to the ground. They also used to say that if knowledge comes then all actions are completely destroyed.

Sri Aurobindo: You have not to take these utterances literally. They only indicate certain spiritual experiences. I should think X was quite an extraordinary man; there is no doubt about it.

Disciple: He had a great admiration for Soham Swami who used to come to Bhawanipore once in a year. Perhaps if he were alive X would not have come to this Yoga.

Sri Aurobindo: Who was the Swami?

Disciple: He was a Vedantic yogi.

Sri Aurobindo: But Vedanta does not say that you can do Yoga in a wink, that one day you get up and find everything is done.

Disciple: If the Yoga could be done in that way it would be very good.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, what is the good of doing Sadhana and working long years after it? It is in Bhakti Yoga that everything is done by Name and Bhava. Whether the path is easy or not depends on what Yoga you are doing. In the ordinary Bhakti Yoga you want a certain condition of emotional excitement and intensity. If you can get that you have done what you wanted.

Disciple: Do you think that such an emotional intensity can be kept up permanently?

Sri Aurobindo: That is another matter.

Disciple: If you can't keep it, that means you are unable to bear it.

Sri Aurobindo: Then, also, you have *viraha-bhāva* — the emotion of separation, which can be a state of intensity.

Disciple: But Chaitanya's direct disciples like Haridas did quite long Sadhana.

Sri Aurobindo: Oh yes, of course. I am not speaking of men who do the genuine Bhakti Yoga, they have to do a lot of things systematically and gradually.

Disciple: There are very cheap yogis, some who used to give *brahma darśana* — vision of Brahman — for five rupees. Some press the eyeballs and make people see the "light"!

Sri Aurobindo: The Gaekwad also used to say the same thing. He used to say: "People say that Brahman is Light but that I see when I press my eyes. What is the difference between that and the Brahman?" I did not know anything about Yoga at that time and so I used to say: "It is not quite the same light."

Disciple: There is a physiological explanation.

Sri Aurobindo: Whatever the physiological explanation may be, it is certain that when the eyes are pressed or even without being pressed, if the mind is concentrated on the centre of the psychic vision you see a light, a round globe of light which goes on increasing. That is not due to anything physical. It is the light from one of the inner centres, especially the *ājñā cakra* — the centre of will — and you can make it very bright and big by connecting it with the *brahma-randhra*, — the centre on the top of the head.

Disciple: Is every sense organ connected, like the eye, with an inner centre?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. After all, the distinctions we make between mental, vital and physical are not quite true: they are not separate parts — they are all one. And I think the Vedic Rishis found out a great truth when they spoke of the Sun in the physical as one with the highest Sun. After all, the physical is as much a manifestation of the Higher Force as anything else and I do not understand why we should not expect in it similar powers.

I had myself a remarkable experience of the psychic sight. I was at Baroda, my psychic sight was not fully developed and I was trying to develop it by dwelling upon the after-image and also by attending to the interval between wakefulness and sleep. Then I saw this round circle of light and when I began *prāṇāyāma* it became very much intensified.

Disciple: The Hatha Yogins also can awaken these *cakras.*

Sri Aurobindo: What the Hatha Yogi can achieve is to get the perfect control of the vital forces working in the body and also control over the physical functions. This also produces some indirect influence in the mind. But I do not think that by Hatha Yoga pure and simple, you can realise God.

Disciple: I know a Hatha Yogi who has done all the *kriyās* — movements and postures — and he said that even though he knew everything of Hatha Yoga he had not seen God. He even said to me: "I don't believe there is any God because I could not succeed in seeing him even after so much trouble."

Sri Aurobindo: That is because he stopped short at Hatha Yoga; he should have gone further.

Disciple: What is the use of prolonging the life of the body?

Sri Aurobindo: What is the harm in it?

Disciple: But it is only trying for a long lease of life. What use is there in it? Vivekananda used to say that even trees have long life.

Sri Aurobindo: Well, that is not the answer. It is an epigram. I

do not know why one should not recognise achievement wherever it is found.

Disciple: But what is the idea behind Hatha Yoga?

Sri Aurobindo: Why should we not value achievement for its own sake? Even prolonging life everybody cannot do.

♈

6 MAY 1926

Tirupati came today in spite of notice to the contrary. He was not allowed to enter any of the Ashram houses.

In the evening Sri Aurobindo said: "He had no force this time; his movements were merely mechanical. The Mother has cut off inner contact since April and after that the forces seem to have left him."

The following letter was sent to him:

Your aspiration to be my manifestation and all the rest of the delusions to which you have surrendered yourself are not Yoga or Sadhana. They are an illusion of your vital being and your brain. We tried to cure you and for a few days while you were obeying my instructions you were on the point of being cured. But you have called back your illness and made it worse than before. You seem to be no longer capable even of understanding what I write to you; you read your own delusions into my letters. I can do nothing more for you.

All that I can tell you is to go back to Vizianagaram and allow yourself to be taken care of there. I can make no arrangements for you anywhere. I can give only a last advice. Throw away the foolish arrogance and vanity that have been the cause of your illness; consent to become like an ordinary man living in the normal

physical mind.

Now that is your only means of being saved from your illness.

Sri Aurobindo

There was a letter from Y.

Sri Aurobindo: Her experience indicates the nature of the obstruction in her Sadhana. She has the ordinary feminine love and attachment and also a conventional mind. She is also attached to her children. She has to get rid of it if she wants to get along in Sadhana.

She had some aspiration in the mind and she has got some capacity there; but she was careful to keep her vital being untouched, and so she can't get on further unless she asks for the Truth there also.

Another letter was from A.

Sri Aurobindo: It is no use her feeling the ascetic tendency. She must combine life and yoga. There is growth by meditation and also by life. She ought to try to be unattached and must bring the Higher Consciousness to bear upon life. She must do actions from that Consciousness.

As to external disturbance, tell her not to depend too much on outside circumstances for her Sadhana. In fact, one never gets the ideal conditions. The sadhak must depend upon his inner force and continue his Sadhana even when there is noise. I do not see why one should not be able to meditate when the Hindu-Muslim riot is going on.

Meditation is one half of the development, while being able to keep the attitude all the time is the other part. When one has got the right poise he can meditate under any condition.

Disciple: Even when music is going on by the side?

Sri Aurobindo (*humorously*)**:** This information is for those who have to suffer the noise — not for those who make it. (*Laughter*)

(*The disciple who asked the question was learning instrumental music*.)

ON THE GODS AND ASURAS

4 APRIL 1924

Disciple: In the *Bhāgawata* there are descriptions of beings on the mental and other subtle planes. What influence is the Supramental Yoga likely to exert on them when it is perfected?

Sri Aurobindo: What do you mean? Do you refer to the mental in men or to beings who have no bodies but are living on the mental plane? If you say that a plane is supramentalised then all the beings on that plane also must be supramentalised. Then by that dme the Pushwala[16] also may have his mind transformed. You can't expect the Universal Law to change like that. These planes and the beings on them change in relation to you or in so far as they come in contact with you. But *they* cannot change by *your* doing Sadhana.

Disciple: How do the beings on the mental plane come in contact with us and how do they undergo change or do Sadhana?

Sri Aurobindo: These distinctions between the various grades of being are bound to remain; otherwise there would be only a Supramental universe. For the Lila to go on these distinctions are necessary. Besides, among these beings, each has his own destiny to fulfil. They must go by their own way.

Disciple: How would the Supramental Yoga affect the earth-plane and the laws of this universe?

Sri Aurobindo: If the Supramental Truth were made a fact on this earth, then surely, you do not think that the Pushwala also would immediately change. It would be more easily possible for other human beings to embody that Truth. It would create an atmosphere in the world. But in the general humanity it would not

[16] The rickshawala. *Pousse-pousse*, the vehicle then in use, was pushed by the man from behind while the passenger steered it.

introduce a sudden break. It would make it more easy for a larger number of men to attain to the Intuitive plane — at present there are very few who can do it.

The influence of the man who brings down the Supramental Truth would be more effective on those who came in contact with him and that would be in proportion to each ones opening to the Higher Power. It would not mean that the trees would begin to speak or that the animal mind would suddenly change.

Disciple: Can it be that no influence would be produced on the earth-plane?

Sri Aurobindo: The Power *is* there that was not there before. The atmosphere is also there that was not there before; and so it is bound to bring about a certain change. But it would not radically alter the laws of the universe.

MAY 1924

Disciple: Is there any instance of an Asura Siddha on the Supramental plane?

Sri Aurobindo: No.

Disciple: You had indicated in a list of classified beings the Asura as one type.

Sri Aurobindo: I meant there 'Asura' in the Vedic sense. The mental Asura is a mistranslation of something in the Supermind and in the original Puissance. Pure Power is called Asura. It is the Vedic Asura and not the Puranic Asura. In the Veda 'Asura' is a title applied to all the gods — in many places Indra is called Asura. It was later that the derivation from Sura was found and A-sura became the titan. Originally, 'Asura' indicates the highest Puissance. It is perhaps in the tenth Mandala that it is used in the

Puranic sense.

♏

9 DECEMBER 1925

Talk turned to X's demand on Y that he should acknowledge him as God. This was in Bengal.

Disciple: How did you escape from the god?

Disciple: X used to come to me in what he called the ''divine mood'', which I found to be an abnormal mood. And then he used to tell me that he was God. I used to remain silent. Then when he pressed me too much I asked him to uproot the tree in the compound if he was God.

Disciple: Very hard test for God to pass!

Disciple: You wanted God to be Kikarsingh! A very athletic God! (*Laughter*)

There was then talk about another spiritual figure in Bengal. A disciple of this Guru, A, argued with a Pandit trying to prove the Avatarhood of the Guru. But the Pandit would not accept it. So when he slept at night on an iron bed-stead they applied an electric current and gave him shocks, to make him accept the Guru's Avatarhood!

Sri Aurobindo: But I thought A always denied that he was an Avatar.

Disciple: I also thought so. But after a famous leader became his disciple there has been a change in him.

Sri Aurobindo: That is likely. Success may have turned his head. But I don't understand why people demand external signs of an Avatar. What has it to do with the external life?

Disciple: The idea is that there must be Aishwarya, divine Powers, in an Avatar.

Sri Aurobindo: Aishwarya is all right. But it is essentially a consciousness. What external sign can there be of an inner spiritual consciousness?

Disciple: But I suppose these two things, the inner spiritual consciousness of the Divine and the Aishwarya, are not incompatible.

Sri Aurobindo: Not at all. But there are lots of people who have powers, whatever their nature, but may not have any spiritual consciousness. For instance, Coué has a certain power, and so have some occultists in Europe. But they are far from any spiritual consciousness. Generally the man who has some such power is very ordinary and turned downwards in his ordinary vital movements.

(*After a long pause*) It is not essential that the Higher Consciousness must manifest itself in life and in action upon large masses of men. It is not merely a question of power. The question is what power is manifested, from where does one bring it? For instance, Napoleon had a certain power but that does not mean that he had a spiritual consciousness. So there may be power or powers but no spiritual consciousness. The higher up one goes one finds that the ordinary men are left far behind and cannot reach him, and so his power cannot work upon them.

Again, you cannot expect work from the Avatar in the same way as from ordinary men. He can work directly upon universal forces and thus work on humanity without seemingly doing anything and nobody can know what work he has done. It would look ridiculous and also arrogant if I were to say that I worked for the success of the Russian Revolution for three years. Yet I was one of the influences that worked to make it a success. I also worked for Turkey.

Disciple: What about India?

Sri Aurobindo: It takes time. I worked through some people, but

the Power stops when people become intoxicated with success.

♐

12 JANUARY 1926

Sri Aurobindo: Temporary occupation by the Higher Consciousness is quite possible. But I do not see the use if the Avatar has to make himself recognised like this by declarations or self-advertisements. Ramakrishna said this and I think everybody who had a great spiritual Power has also said it sometime or other. There is nothing impossible in it. Such temporary occupation Chaitanya also had and in that state he used to speak as the Lord.

♉

1 JUNE 1926

Disciple: These newspapers print anything they like. Can they print the talk that takes place in one's house?

Sri Aurobindo: If you expect manners from modern newspapers you will be sorely disappointeded in these democratic days. It is one of the blessings of modern democracy! If you were in America and did not give any interview even then they would invent one! The press is a public institution. Formerly, it was something dignified, but now the newspapers are the correct measures of the futility of human life.

Disciple: The Princess of Baroda was married to the Prince of Wales of England in an American paper — with photographs and all!

Sri Aurobindo: They are a faithful mirror of the common mind.

Disciple: They are moving pictures of humanity.

Disciple: But formerly they were not like that.

Sri Aurobindo: Formerly there was no common mind and then it was not organised. It is the same with all other modern things — the press, the theatre, the radio; they drag down everything to the level of the crowd.

Disciple: But the radio and telephone are a great success in Japan and in Europe; one can listen to the best musicians for four to six hours.

Sri Aurobindo: But in America they do not know whether it is cinema that is helping crime. Of course, they want to use it for an educative purpose. They may relay good music but the question is whether people appreciate and understand it.

Disciple: Radios are better than gramophones.

Sri Aurobindo: Gramophones were murderers of music. But unfortunately, it is the same with all things that require popular support, — the theatre, cinema, etc.; they succeed only if they can pamper the common man's tastes. The impact of the vital on the physical plane increases vital desires.

Disciple: Where do the best people go?

Sri Aurobindo: They have to compromise if they care to be heard. But in that compromise all that is best gets so much mixed with evil. I do not mean evil in the moral sense, but what is inartistic and bad. It is the same old question of the mass being pulled up by something higher. But, as it always happens, instead of being pulled up, it is the mass that pulls everything down to its level.

Take, for instance, poetry. There is more poetry written now than ever before; there are some products of a certain type of brilliancy more common. Perhaps the number of people who read poetry is larger. But if you take poetry in the mass you will find that it is going down. Everything that depends upon the common man

for its support has to come down to his level.

Disciple: Are things worse or becoming better?

Sri Aurobindo: To me the condition of Europe, after the war especially, seems almost to be the same as that at the break-up and disintegration of the Roman Empire. There is the same tendency to plunge the world into barbarism again.

Disciple: Is there no hope?

Sri Aurobindo: There is always a hope. At the time of the Roman Empire also there was a hope, but it did not materialise.

Disciple: Can one say there is greater hope this time?

Sri Aurobindo: The struggle has become worse, more acute.

Disciple: Men are beings on the physical plane, but they have vital and mental and psychic parts. Do the beings of the vital plane possess also mental and psychic parts?

Sri Aurobindo: The vital and physical planes are different. On the physical plane there is evolution through different grades of the being; ours is a plane of evolution. On the vital plane there is no evolution. It is a plane of typal beings; there the conciousness does not evolve from one plane to another.

The animal has its consciousness held and imprisoned by the vital; and when it is ready, the consciousness changes to the mental and the animal reincarnates as the human being. Some of our cats are ready for the human birth.

In man that transition has taken place, he has crossed the border. But the ordinary man can hardly be said to have a soul or the psychic being. The soul *is* there but it is covered up and very much behind.

Disciple: Do the Asuras have also the possibilities of man?

Sri Aurobindo: No.

Disciple: Is there no progress for the Asura?

Sri Aurobindo: Not in the sense of evolution of consciousness.

Disciple: But you said that the Asura can be transformed or converted?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. They can change their working and open to something higher.

Disciple: Is that what you meant by their being converted? Then can they help evolution?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, they can manifest something higher than their vital nature and become instruments of the Divine. But generally they do not change.

Disciple: What becomes of the Asuras if they are not converted?

Sri Aurobindo: They can be annihilated; but if you ask what would happen at the end of the *kalpa*, well, it is difficult to answer. If they change, then they can open themselves to something higher and try to manifest it.

Disciple: Some of the Asuras are said to have practised Sadhana. What is their kind of Sadhana? You also said that they are very intelligent beings.

Sri Aurobindo: I never said that they have true ideas and great ideals and that they are great mental beings. What I said was that they are clever in carrying out their purpose; they know how to work out results.

Disciple: What is their place in evolution? Could it go on without them?

Sri Aurobindo: There is the old idea of Devas and Asuras struggling to control human evolution. The Asuras are responsible for the great complexity of the world, but in my opinion they are not a necessity. They realise themselves through revolt, suffering, struggle, and difficulty. But the world could have evolved differently — more like a flower blooming from within outwards. But the forces of the Asura-type entered the universal play of forces

and perverted it. This is the truth known to almost all the religions: for instance, the snake, the Evil, tempting Eve — Prakriti. Eve deceiving Adam — Purusha. Adam consenting and their fall: this they speak of as the fall of the cosmic man.

In India this struggle as to who should control the course of human evolution, between the Devas and the Asuras, expresses the same truth.

Disciple: What is then the truth in the Puranic idea of worshipping God through *vaira bhāva* — feeling of opposition and hostility?

Sri Aurobindo: In the case of Havana and Hiranyakashipu, they were human beings who became Asuras and chose the path of opposition to the Divine. It is really a fall and it shows that the course of evolution for man is not to become an Asura. That is to say, the course of human evolution is *not* from the animal to the vital being and then to the Asura. Asuric life is regarded as a fall for man. If you get converted to the Asuric nature then you lose the chance of your evolution.

Disciple: How should one protect oneself against the attacks and influence of the Asuras?

Sri Aurobindo: Through purity and sincerity one is secure from the Asuras. They might give you blows, they might deceive and befog the mind, they might retard and make you commit mistakes, but if you have the white light of purity and sincerity they cannot harm you. There is no definitive fall, you will go through.

♉

15 JUNE 1926

Disciple: If the Asuras represent the dark side of God on the vital plane, does this dark side exist on every plane? If so, are there

beings on the mental plane who correspond to the dark side?

Sri Aurobindo: The Asura is really the dark side of God on the mental plane. Mind is the very field of the Asura. His characteristic is egoistic strength which refuses the Higher Law. The Asura has got self-control, Tapas, intelligence — only, all that is for his ego.

On the vital plane the corresponding forces are called the Rakshasas who represent violent passions and impulses. There are other beings on the vital plane whom we call *pramatta* and *piśāca* and they manifest, more or less, on the physico-vital plane.

Disciple: What is the corresponding being on the higher plane?

Sri Anrobindo: On the higher plane there are no Asuras — there the Truth prevails. There are 'Asuras' there in the Vedic sense, — beings with divine powers. The mental Asura is only a deviation of that power.

The work of the Asuras has all the characteristics of mind in it. It is mind refusing to submit to the Higher Law; it is the mind in revolt. It works on the basis of ego and ignorance.

Disciple: What are the forces that correspond to the dark side of God on the physical plane?

Sri Aurobindo: They are what may be called the elemental beings, or rather, obscure elemental forces — they are 'forces' more than 'beings'. It is these that the Theosophists call the Elementals. They are not individualised beings like the Asura and the Rakshasa, they are ignorant forces working on the subtle-physical plane.

Disciple: What is the word for them in Sanskrit?

Sri Aurobindo: What are called *bhūtas* seem most nearly to correspond to them.

Disciple: The term 'elemental' means that they work through the elements?

Sri Aurobindo: There are two kinds of elementals: one mischievous and the other innocent. What Europeans call gnomes

come under this category.

Disciple: You said some time back that some forces of diseases are individualised while others are not.

Sri Aurobindo: I did not say so; what I might have said is that there are conscious forces behind the diseases. Diseases are movements of forces.

Disciple: You said that some diseases feed on the vitality of man.

Sri Aurobindo: It is not diseases that feed on man's vitality. It may be a vital being sucking up man's vitality and the result may be a disease.

Disciple: What is the relation between these forces: the *rākśasa*, the *piśācha* and the *pramatta*?

Sri Aurobindo: The Rakshasa makes use of them for his purpose.

Disciple: Does not a disease originate from our breaking the laws of nature?

Sri Aurobindo: What do you mean by the laws of nature? What are these laws?

Disciple: When a man acts from desire he may do things which he is not compelled to do by need: e.g., overeating, lust, etc.

Sri Aurobindo: There are no such universal laws of nature. If you ask people who have lived a long life you will find one saying that he lives long because he has kept to what you would call the laws of nature, that he is not smoking or taking wine, etc. While another will say that he has been able to live long because he had always had a peg! And so on. So there are no such universal laws.

Disciple: But it is a fact that observance of hygienic laws diminishes mortality.

Sri Aurobindo: What you can at the most say is that if one keeps

what you call the hygienic laws — one has a chance, a better chance, of escape from diseases. We set up these hygienic laws because people do not know the needs of the physical being. If you allow the physical being to be unhampered by vital desires, or mental ideas, it would choose the thing it needs.

Disciple: It is a sort of instinct.

Disciple: The animals have it in a greater degree than man.

Sri Aurobindo: You may call it an instinct but when you become conscious, it is more than an instinct; it is the true consciousness in the physical being. The animals may have it more than man, but it is not complete because the animal has to rely on food which is not secure and so when it finds it is hungry, it does not always make a correct selection though it is more correct than in the case of man.

What you call 'laws' are mere habits. I have seen people who used to keep to all the so-called hygienic laws and yet they did not escape disease. They used to eat out of pure need for the body without any desire and yet they were always sick.

Disciple: A Sannyasi who used to eat only plantain and milk was always sick.

Disciple: Why do Sannyasis and Yogis pay so much attention to their food?

Sri Aurobindo: It is not for observing the hygienic laws. Their aim is to reduce the needs of the body and the Rajasic tendencies and so they want to minimise the needs of the physical body. They try to take Sattwic food.

Disciple: Many things that are considered hygienic would be rejected by the Sannyasis as non-Sattwic.

Sri Aurobindo: They take vegetarian food. But all vegetables are not Sattwic.

Disciple: I took, in France, the food most forbidden for the Hindus and I found that it was not more Rajasic than the vegetarian

food I had taken in India.

Sri Aurobindo: That is also my experience. I think it is more or less a psychological factor.

Disciple: The Gita has given a classification of what is Sattwic, Rajasic and Tamasic food.

Sri Aurobindo: But the Gita's classification is with regard more to the character of the food than to the food taken.

But about diseases there is, really speaking, a vital balance which each one has to find out for himself, as it is not the same for all; and even when one has secured the vital balance, provided there is no bad heredity, then one can say that one has the greatest chance of escaping diseases. But even that does not give man absolute immunity. Even people who somehow stumble into this vital balance, once they are attacked by a disease, due even to heredity, then they get ill most suddenly and succumb easily.

Disciple: Will it be possible to live only on a diet of mineral and synthesised food developed by science?

Disciple: No, it will not. Science always goes forward and finds that it has to go further. When they found protein they thought that all proteins had equal value in food; now they find that each protein has a different food-value. So it will always be.

Disciple: In the war we were given a soup-powder which was very nourishing and good.

Disciple: When gelatine was found it was thought that the problem of cheap and substantial food was solved because gelatine contains nitrogen. It was given to the patients in the hospitals with the result that some of them died. They have found that gelatine does not contain vitamins.

One of the latest ideas is that man can live on sunlight.

Disciple: And when you get a sun-stroke it means indigestion! (*Laughter*)

Disciple: Because science has not yet succeeded in preparing artificial food it does not mean that it will not succeed.

Disciple: Is it possible to live without food?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, it is. When I did my fast of about 23 days, while living in Chettiar's house, I very nearly solved the problem.

I could walk eight hours a day as usual. I continued my mental work and Sadhana also as usual and I found that I was not in the least weak at the end of the fast. But the flesh began to grow less and I did not find a clue to replacing the very material part that was reduced in the body.

When I broke the fast, then also I did not observe the usual rule of people who go on long fasts, of beginning with little food and so on. I began again with the same quantity as I used to take before.

Gandhi's method of fasting seems to me to be the most unsuitable, — of announcing beforehand and allowing all sorts of people to put in their counter-suggestions to him. I tried fasting once in jail, but that was when I used to sleep once in three nights. I lost ten pounds in weight, but I felt stronger at the end of ten days than I was before the fast. I could lift up a weight, which I could not before.

It was not for conquering sleep that I began the waking experiment, but because there was a pressure of Sadhana and I liked to do Sadhana rather than sleep.

Disciple: Do you think it is possible to do without food?

Sri Aurobindo: I believe it is perfectly possible. Only, I did not get the clue. But because I did not succeed, there is no reason why somebody else should not succeed. It is possible to supply the vital energy to the body to a very great extent. Only, the vital material part of the body seems to need to draw the vital energy from food. There must be some clue and I had solved the problem almost nine-tenths.

Disciple: Is it possible for man to draw the vital energy from animals? My grandfather used to say that he got vital energy from the horse he used to ride every day.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, it is possible. You can even draw it from man without riding him. But the easier process is to draw the vital energy from the universal vital plane. It is there all around you. There are two methods of drawing it: one is you exert your force and draw the vital energy from the universal, the other is to be passive and to allow it to flow into you. Formerly, I used to draw it. But nowadays I merely allow it to flow, remaining open to it.

Disciple: Is it easier to draw vital energy from man than from the universal?

Sri Aurobindo: It is not so easy as you think. There are conditions for drawing it from a man or supplying it to another man. But it is much more easy to draw it from the universal. The one fact is that in man the vital energy is limited, while the universal is inexhaustible. If you supply your vital force to another man you would be exhausted if you don't draw it from the universal.

Disciple: There are many stories about Tlbbati Baba's age and powers.

Sri Aurobindo: How old is he?

Disciple: One can't say; but Bibhuti Bhushan asked him and he said he was young at the time when the battle of Plassy was fought. It is said that he changed his Bengali body and took up that of a Tibetan.

Sri Aurobindo: But that is not physical immortality.

Disciple: He looks very old, his skin is dark and wrinkled. When I went to him it seemed as if he would not be able to get up — he was lying down — but he jumped up, quite like a healthy man.

Sri Aurobindo: That means he is keeping up his body with his

vital force; one can always do that.

Disciple: But it is said that he acquired longevity by using certain drugs which are known among the Tibetans.

Sri Aurobindo: That is also possible. In the Himalayas there are herbs, I believe, which can give longevity and which are known by tradition to Sadhus and others living there.

But even supplying vital force to the body does not give one absolute immunity from diseases. If you are not on your guard, or if there is an accident, which you could not foresee, you may get a disease.

II

26 JUNE 1926

Disciple: You spoke yesterday about the lesser and the greater Gods.

Sri Aurobindo: I meant to imply a distinction, otherwise I would have used a different word.

Disciple: What is the distinction between them?

Sri Aurobindo: When I spoke of the lesser gods I meant the smaller gods who represent the principle of harmony in nature. In them you find not the straight, but the free movement towards the Light. They go from Light to Light. It is like the Asura, only the Asuras movement is perverse and violent, trying to take the kingdom of God by violence.

By the greater Gods I meant the Gods who preside over the universal manifestation. They are, really speaking, what the Veda calls "powers of the One". They are different.

Disciple: Take, for instance, Indra.

Sri Aurobindo: I was not thinking of any names when I spoke

about them and they have nothing to do with the Puranic Devatas.

Disciple: Can we take the Vedic gods?

Sri Aurobindo: I was not even thinking of the Vedic gods. These smaller gods and Asuras are not the powers of the Supreme, the Divine; they are powers of the soul and formations on the Nature-plane of the universal vital.

Disciple: Is not the heaven in which man's soul is supposed to enjoy itself after death different from this plane of the smaller gods?

Sri Aurobindo: The 'heaven' of the religions is quite a different thing. It is the heaven of the vital plane. But apart from this religious heaven, the plane of the vital is full of charm and splendour of its own, and the beings of this plane have a splendour and greatness and knowledge of their own. Much of the poetry and art comes from that plane. I am not speaking of the perverse hostile vital world which generally comes in contact with our physical plane.

Disciple: If they are not hostile beings, as you say, then they can manifest grand things here.

Sri Aurobindo: But generally they are too arrogant to do that, they are too self-centred.

Disciple: But some of them do manifest themselves through men.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, some of them. But mostly when you are doing Sadhana you come across those that are hostile.

Disciple: What is the difference between their law of evolution and ours?

Sri Aurobindo: There is no law of evolution in them as in the human world. For instance, they are not limited by the physical consciousness as man is. There is more of the universal movement in them than in man. Their only evolution can be in two ways. I think they also want to change themselves into some higher beings.

They can do it by a sort of Tapas of their own and arrive at a higher consciousness or they can do it by service; i.e., they can put their power at the service of the Truth and thus change.

Disciple: Why do they try to take hold of men?

Sri Aurobindo: First of all, they influence and dominate men in order to manifest their power and take possession of the physical plane. Secondly, they do so in order to get worship of men by curing diseases and posing as God. Thirdly, they do not merely dominate but take possession of men in order to take Bhoga of the physical plane.

Disciple: Why are these forces specially attracted to places where people are making a spiritual endeavour?

Sri Aurobindo: First of all, when you open yourself to some Truth which is Above, by that very effort you open yourself to the worlds that are behind in a much more powerful way than an ordinary man. That gives these forces a chance. Secondly, they want to frustrate any such effort. Thirdly, there are some forces among them in whom you find a mixture of two tendencies, something in them wants to get into the spiritual atmosphere and likes it, while another part of their being is opposed to it.

Disciple: How does a man open himself to these forces?

Sri Aurobindo: There are various ways: for instance, ambition, or lust, greed, vanity, arrogance, any number of these things through which these forces can influence man.

Théon believed that the vital world has precipitated down on the earth and there is bound to be struggle between the Truth and these forces. Either the Truth wins or they. After giving the fight — the last struggle — one of them would retire. At present the human being is more or less a field of this struggle; he is not a power of the soul. There are cases where a man actually incarnates these forces.

II

13 JULY 1926

Disciple: You said about Tirupati when he went wrong that a great and powerful vital being came for manifestation and it was necessary for the organisation of his vital plane. What is meant by organisation of the vital plane?

Sri Aurobindo: To bring about a harmony on that plane for effectuation. The vital being is for effective realisation.

Disciple: What would have been the nature of its manifestation if it had organised his vital life?

Sri Aurobindo: It brings in a greater power of realisation: a power of bringing about an inner change and then a change in your surroundings and then a power to change events. If these beings could realise themselves on the physical plane, then all the difficulties in the Sadhana would disappear.

Disciple: Is the coming down of such beings on every plane a necessity for the manifestation of the Supermind?

Sri Aurobindo: No, it is not a necessity.

Disciple: Do these kinds of beings know the Supermind?

Sri Aurobindo: These beings have no knowledge of the Supermind. But as they have a free intelligence they can be brought within the influence of the Supermind, and if they can surrender themselves to the Supermind, then they can help as instruments.

Disciple: This force was trying to come down into Tirupati with a great power and was insisting on the laws of its own plane and he was allowing the expression without any regard to the laws of the physical plane — is this true?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, these beings, as I have said, have got a free

intelligence and they are not limited by the laws of the physical plane, — they have not what we call physical prudence; they have an objective in view and a great force to carry it out. They simply press down for their own realisation. It is these kinds of forces that are behind revolutions and great movements; they do not care how much is broken in the process. We see in history some men of genius who have been able to hold these beings in themselves. Sometimes when everything is broken and destroyed, the mind comes and presses down and tries to put things together and organise some kind of harmony.

Therefore the man who wants to hold them ought to have a sound physical mind which knows the contingencies of the physical plane and also has got the light of the Supermind. If the Supermind itself came, it would be a different thing, because it knows everything, and if you put the force under the light of the Supermind you can use it as an instrument.

Disciple: Where is that force gone now?

Sri Aurobindo: I don't know. It was there when he left Pondicherry; it did not leave its address with me! You can write to the Post Office of the vital plane! (*Laughter*)

Disciple: Why? Someone else can try to bring it down and break down in the effort? (*Laughter*)

Disciple: Can one know and see these forces?

Sri Aurobindo: Of course, you can. If something in you can put itself in touch with these planes you can know them and see them. I hope you don't believe that your physical self is the only being in you. These forces have their own plane and they are not all the time busy with your earth-plane. You must not exaggerate the importance of the earth-plane.

Even for us the external, physical life of man does not matter much. Not that the earth-plane is not important. It *is* important, according to what you can put into it. Otherwise, how is the

physical life of man better than that of an ant? In order to bring down any higher spiritual force into the earth-plane you require to sit down to it, you have to call down and hold the Power in you. You have to allow it to organise your being and transform it. Then you can think of action.

Therefore I say, it would be foolish to expect me to go to the Bengal Council and work there. But perhaps your physical mind thinks that going and working in the Council is, perhaps, more important than anything else! But your inmost being may have much more important work to do than that.

Disciple: You said that man's life on the physical plane is not so important. But there are so many good things in man; how can we compare him to an ant?

Sri Aurobindo: In what way is the physical man superior to an ant?

Disciple: There is art, there is literature.

Sri Aurobindo: Humanity is not organised for art!

Disciple: And even art does not come from the physical plane!

Disciple: You spoke of the vital beings living on their own plane. Do they also fight each other on their own plane?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. That is what is meant by the struggle between the angels and the devils in the Bible. The being I spoke of with regard to T was not from the hostile vital world, — it was from the higher level of the vital plane.

Disciple: What is meant by the Supermind? Is it what is called *parā śakti*?

Sri Aurobindo: Para Shakti is not Supermind. There are above the Supramental Power other ranges like the Ananda Consciousness. You can say that the Supermind is the organising power of the Divine which is behind all this manifestation. It is the Supermind which supports the whole universal movement.

Disciple: Can one say that the Supramental Power is also "one's own" power in essence — as we say of mind "my mind"? Can I speak of "my supermind"?

Sri Aurobindo: What is your mind? It is merely an organisation, for a particular purpose, of the universal mind. So long as you are in the Ignorance you go on saying I, I, My, My — and nothing interests you more than that. But when you get to the Supermind you know that it is all false. Then you know your Self; the Jiva knows itself and also sees the mould of Prakriti. You also know the Higher Power above and so you don't commit the mistake which the mind does. Even when the yogi speaks of "my power" or "my work" it is for mere convenience. All the time he is conscious of the Divine Power that is working through him. It looks more pretentious to say "the Divine Power that is working through me".

Disciple: Without using I and My one cannot even speak.

Disciple: Can we not say that the Supramental is already working in everything, because it is behind all?

Sri Aurobindo: It is not the Supramental Power that is working at present in the universe; it supports this universal movement, but it is not working directly. If the Supramental Power were not there you could not deal with the material forces with exactness as you do at present. You can do so because the Supermind is there in Matter.

Disciple: Is the Supermind an instrument?

Stri Aurobindo: It is a consciousness and if you can bring that consciousness into mind, life and body, you can perfect the instruments.

Disciple: Is it not possible for man to manifest the whole of Para Shakti? What is the Ananda plane in life?

Sri Aurobindo: He may be able to manifest it in the future, when the Supermind has become a stable achievement. But the

present organisation of human nature is quite unable to bear it. It is too infinite for man. I am not speaking of the mental infinite. I am speaking of the Sachchidananda on its own highest level. You can imagine what would happen to man if the whole of the infinite Ananda came down upon him, — when you know that even a drop of it coming to the mind sends him flying and dancing and crying! When only a particle of Ananda descends you get the *paramahaṁsa*, *jaḍa*, *bāla*, *unmatta* or *piśāca* types, i.e., the inert, the childlike, the mad or perverse, and the devilish.

Disciple: It is, perhaps, because a fragment comes that man is upset — all the impurities in his nature are thrown up with the Ananda.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. If the highest Supermind came it would know everything; it knows the gradations, the stages, that are necessary, the time and the conditions.

ൟ

17 AUGUST 1926

Disciple: What is the *akṣara* consciousness of which the Gita speaks?

Sri Aurobindo: It is the immutable, impersonal Brahmic Consciousness — it is the basis of calm and equality and universal passivity. It is an aspect of the Transcendent, the *Puruṣottama.*

Disciple: What is the gain in attaining this consciousness in Sadhana?

Sri Aurobindo: An impersonal attitude, calm and equality — it can give you complete freedom from nature, from all bondage.

Disciple: Why does the Supreme take up the impersonal status or attitude?

Sri Aurobindo: Because it is necessary for creation, as a support for the universal nature, to maintain all the play of the universal forces. He supports all equally as the *akṣara.*

Disciple: You spoke about the plane of the Gods. How can one reach that plane?

Sri Aurobindo: The key for it lies in a certain knack. One has to ascend to it.

Disciple: What are the conditions of attaining to it?

Sri Aurobindo: Conditions? There are no conditions. I don't see in what way it would help you even if I said anything. Well, the first condition is that you can't approach the *true* Gods with your ego.

Disciple: And the vital gods?

Sri Aurobindo: Gods are on every plane: 'Gods' is a very wide term. It has no fixed meaning, it is rather loose. The vital gods can give you power, remove your economic and other difficulties — of course, conditionally.

Disciple: Conditionally in what sense?

Sri Aurobindo: For instance, they can give you power, but you have to satisfy their conditions and worship them.

Disciple: The Asura also gives power.

Sri Aurobindo: The Asura gives you nothing. He only uses you for his purpose and, when your use is over, throws you aside. But the vital gods are sometimes helpful in spiritual life. One must be able to go beyond them. But they oppose you if you try to overpass them; they put obstacles in your way and try to keep you to them. It was the purpose of Indra sending *apsarās* to entice the Rishis, the great seers and yogins.

Disciple: I thought it was only a fable.

Sri Aurobindo: That is the European mentality in you that says

so. The form is that of a fable, but there is a truth behind it. For instance, the Vishwamitra-and-Indra story contains a spiritual truth. If you come out successful in their hard test then the gods approve of your going beyond them.

Disciple: The Asuras are also of divine origin?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes; and they serve the divine purpose in their own way.

Disciple: Can one say that the true Gods are the powers of the Divine?

Sri Aurobindo: They are the personalities of the Divine.

Disciple: On what plane are they?

Sri Aurobindo: They are on the Supramental plane and above.

Disciple: Above the Supramental?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. Do you think that Supermind is the highest plane?

Disciple: The highest consciousness is said to be that of the Supreme Sachchidananda.

Sri Aurobindo: The highest is what we call Purushottama, but man can get to the Ananda plane only.

Disciple: To what plane does Krishna of the Vaishnavites belong?

Sri Aurobindo: What do you mean by Krishna?

Disciple: According to the Vaishnavas, Krishna belongs to the Ananda plane; they indicate it by saying that it is far beyond the *akṣara*.

Disciple: Is it true that if one wants to attain to the Gods he must do it through the psychic?

Sri Aurobindo: There! You have got another clue.

Disciple: I want to know more about it so as to have another

clue. I don't want to knock at the wrong door.

Sri Aurobindo: There is another way, if you want to try. Find your own highest self, which is not your ego and is not at the same time the Atman. Then you get to the plane of the Gods.

Disciple: Some believe that the true self is the Jiva and if one is on that plane then he is helped by the Gods.

Disciple: Is the highest personal self of man a god?

Sri Aurobindo: Man is not a god. But he can attain to the plane of the Gods and there he has his divine Self — the Jiva — which is a portion of the Divine. If you knock at their gates with desire, they show you on to the vital gods.

Disciple: There is a belief in the Trinity among the Christians. There are said to be seven Gods and each soul is an emanation of one of the seven Gods. I wonder why seven only?

Sri Aurobindo: Perhaps because we can see seven, the rest we can't.

Disciple: Sri Krishna is described as having a blue light with lightning flashing behind it.

Sri Aurobindo: Blue is the characteristic colour of the spiritual plane and it is special to Krishna. Krishna belongs in the fullness of his divine Personality to the Ananda plane and it is there that you get the fullness.

Disciple: To what plane do the Gods worshipped by the Hindus belong?

Disciple: Do they belong to the vital plane?

Sri Aurobindo: No; they are worshipped in the vital way, but their conception is much larger than that and they generally go up to the higher mental plane.

When the European mind leaves materialism, it takes the vital gods as the true gods.

Disciple: Do the laws of Matter change?

Sri Aurobindo: Physical cells change and the same thing that gives pain gives Ananda.

Disciple: That may be possible in Life manifested in Matter, but in the pure Matter, in the domain of chemistry and physics?

Sri Aurobindo: Why not ? We are speaking of the material part of the human consciousness. What is a law? It means a certain balance among universal forces under certain conditions. If you change the conditions you get a different result. It is not by a miracle that you change what you call a law.

Disciple: The disintegration of radium is unaffected by anything we know of.

Sri Aurobindo: That means you have not got to the thing behind the electron; the electron is not the last word.

Disciple: It seems the electrons have life but no age and we can't separate the old from the young.

Sri Aurobindo: Do you believe that there can be life in a watch?

Disciple: Children believe that!

Sri Aurobindo: And I agree with children. The watches behave differently with different men. It is also certain they answer to man's thought and will.

Disciple: So watches have life!

Sri Aurobindo: You are getting surprises one by one.

Disciple: Flowers have souls, watches have life! It is baffling. I have heard that motor cars have also life.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes — engines and tools also.

Disciple: What is called 'fatigue' in metals, may it not be a sign of life?

Sri Aurobindo: Fatigue is a sign of life. There is a consciousness

also in metals, as well as mind. Life is everywhere.

ॐ

22 AUGUST 1926

Sri Aurobindo (*turning to a disciple*)**:** You asked yesterday about the forms of the Gods and whether they have fixed forms on their own plane. I was thinking it over and I am inclined to believe that they have fixed forms.

Disciple: It is said that each God has his *nitya-rūpa* — eternal form.

Sri Aurobindo: I think so. One cannot see that unless one passes entirely out of the human consciousness. They have forms by which they distinguish themselves from other Gods and also through which they express what they are. It seems there are three elements that enter into this question: first, the form we see may be the reflection of the true or *nitya* form — which may not be entire and which may not be the sarfie for all the planes. It may vary according to the plane on which it is reflected. Secondly, the mind or consciousness of the Bhakta may contribute something to it. Thirdly, it may be a mixture of the two.

Disciple: Have the forms of the Gods any resemblance to the human form?

Sri Aurobindo: Not necessarily. But those who approach the plane of the Gods through the impersonal attitude without stopping at Sachchidananda-consciousness arrive, when they have passed beyond the mental consciousness, to a plane where they see the Gods in forms which resemble the human form. That is, perhaps, the reason why in the Veda we find the name *puruṣa* given to the Gods.

24 AUGUST 1926

Disciple: The world of the true Gods, you said, is the Supramental.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, it is somewhere there.

Disciple: Is it *in* the Supermind or does it go even beyond it?

Sri Aurobindo: It begins in the Supermind and goes further. We need not concern ourselves with it. It is trouble enough getting there.

Disciple: Who created them?

Sri Aurobindo: What is the meaning of putting such silly questions? They are from the beginning of history.

Disciple: What is the difference between the personality of a God and that of a man?

Sri Aurobindo: The same as between your personality and that of a lizard.

Disciple: Personality means being and nature.

Sri Aurobindo: It means various beings and various natures. Different personalities may combine and form one personality.

Disciple: Has the collective personality of India been always there?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, as far as history goes. I don't know what must have been in the Simian period.

Disciple: What is the nature of this collective, or if I may say so, super-personality?

Sri Aurobindo: You have to look at the characteristics of the Indian people to understand that super-personality must be something that represents them. When you are on the other side of mind you can look at it from beyond and see how this works below here; but so long as we are here, in the mind, we have to proceed from the law of our present nature.

Disciple: I wanted to ask whether the nation that would emerge in India today would have the same characteristics as the nations in Europe or would it have something different?

Sri Aurobindo: It can't be the same. Evidently it would be something more.

Disciple: I had a discussion with X; he argued that we had no such national consciousness as in Europe and I maintained that we had something more.

Sri Aurobindo: Perhaps Europe has no such well-defined collective personality as India has. But in Europe you do have several clearly defined *national* personalities. For instance, England has a definite national personality; so also has France. They are trying to create some sort of collective personality, but they have not yet succeeded in giving form to it.

While in India it is quite different. It is a well-defined collective personality which is already there and all these various personalities and types of the Indian nation are its formations, so to say. It is that which expresses itself in them.

Disciple: The differences between different parts of India are variations of the same collective personality?

Sri Aurobindo: It is the same as with the Welsh, the Scots and the English, or the Bavarian and the Prussian, in the same nationality. If there were not this clear collective personality it would have been difficult to create a political nation in India.

But take the case of Asia. There is an attempt at the formation of

a collective Asiatic personality. But if anyone made just now an effort to unite them under a political unity, the result would be a disaster, a ghastly failure.

Disciple: Is it not a fact that the national consciousness evolves in the face of common danger, and so there is an idea that Asia would unite when it has to fight against Europe, and humanity would unite when mankind will have to fight against the people of another planet? (*Laughter*)

Sri Aurobindo: That is a vital way of creating unity. Even in Europe, though there is no collective personality, yet there is a common mentality, a common culture and a common attitude against Asiatics and Africans.

Disciple: Plato says that each form has its own Idea — that is, behind the form is a fixed Idea of the type and it is that which persists while it is the individual that varies. The genus remains the same on the plane of Idea.

Sri Aurobindo: But where is the Idea?

Disciple: In Plato. (*Laughter*)

Disciple: I do not suppose Plato meant a mental abstraction by his Idea. It may mean "creative conception".

Sri Aurobindo: Plato had very mathematical ideas about these things. If he meant by it the creative conception then there are several things in it. First of all, it is not a mental idea but what I call the Real-Idea: that is, Idea with a Reality and a Power. Now, corresponding to every form there is what may be called the archetype, the type-form, and it already exists in the Real-Idea before it exists in matter. Everything exists first in consciousness and then in matter.

Disciple: Could that be the Mahat-Brahma of which the Gita speaks?

Sri Aurobindo: I do not know if Plato had some dim intimation

of the Supramental; but as his mind was mathematical he cast it into rigid rational and mental forms. That was the Greek mind.

Disciple: The Buddhists have an idea that there are Gods without form — there are Rupa Devas and Arupa Devas. What could that mean?

Sri Aurobindo: I do not know Buddhist mythology. But what do you mean by Arupa Loka?

Disciple: A plane of consciousness where the Gods have no forms, perhaps. Or they have forms which are so different from man's, that for man they are no forms at all.

Sri Aurobindo: What do you mean by the Gods having no forms?

Disciple: On the plane of the Gods there are no forms, perhaps.

Sri Aurobindo: What do you mean? The origin of all the forms is there. Even if you call it Arupa Loka still there must be some form. The Gods there must be distinguishing themselves from one another and that means they must have forms. If you say they have no 'human' form it is understandable. All forms need not be human.

Disciple: They say that all abstractions belong to the Arupa Loka. For instance, the idea of beauty.

Sri Aurobindo: Beauty is not an abstraction. It is a power of the Supreme on the plane above the Mind. On the mental plane you have abstractions. It is the mind's way of representing realities of planes higher than its own, but behind these abstractions there is a reality. On the plane above the mind there are no abstractions; there are realities and powers. For instance, you form an abstract idea in the mind about the Supermind. When you get to the Supermind you find it is not an abstraction at all. It is more intensely concrete than Matter, something quite overwhelming in its concreteness. That is why I called it the Real-Idea and not an abstract idea. In that

sense there is nothing more concrete than God. If we were on the pure mental plane we would find Mind quite concrete and real. But as we are on the physical plane we always think that mind is abstract.

Before the Supermind Matter dwindles into a shadow!

Disciple: What is that concreteness like?

Sri Aurobindo: The sense of solidity, mass. That is perhaps what the Veda meant when it said, "Agni is wider of light, and concrete of body." You can say that the Supermind is harder than diamond and yet more fluid than gas.

Disciple: This super-personality or collective personality that presides over India.

Sri Aurobindo: I thought that was finished — you wheel round to that suddenly?

Disciple: Can it be called a god?

Disciple: Better, a goddess?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. Why not? But she may not be a supramental goddess.

Disciple: Then what else can she be?

Sri Aurobindo: She may be an emanation from God.

Disciple: What kind of God?

Sri Aurobindo: Driving me into a tight corner? It depends upon the national characteristics and so many other things. When you go beyond Mind then you can speak from outside how the whole thing here looks. So long as we speak from the lower triplicity [*Mind, Life, Body*], we can only say this much.

Disciple: Can individuals by uniting themselves evolve a collective personality?

Sri Aurobindo: That is like the question which someone put the other day: whether the egg is first or the hen, and I had to say:

"Both together and the cock." (*Laughter*) There must be the collective personality for the individual to be and vice versa!

⏚

6 NOVEMBER 1926

Disciple: It is reported that Ramakrishna used to say about VIvekananda that he was an *aṁśa* — portion — of Shiva. What is the truth in that?

Sri Aurobindo: There is some truth in it. Each of these Gods has, so to say, his own group — what they call *gaṇas* or partial powers, — each member of which represents something of the God. For example, Tirupati, who could not succeed in his Sadhana here at Pondicherry, would have embodied one of the four bodyguards of the Higher Power.[17]

It is possible that there may be a great complexity in manifestation — one can manifest different godheads in different pans of the being. It is necessary to take these inner truths simply and in a straightforward manner without making any fuss. The external, human personality must not be disturbed; it often tries to cinematograph the thing like some modern organisations. That is exactly the way to frustrate it. Making noise is another thing one must avoid. The vital desire for name and fame, the cinematographic tendency, all should be washed away clean. There should be no ego if there is to be a divine manifestation. All noise should only be incidental. I spoke about the world of the Gods because not to speak of it would be dangerous. I spoke of it so that the mind may understand the thing if it comes down. I am trying to bring it down into the physical as it can no longer be delayed and then things may happen. Formerly, to speak of it would have been

[17] In those days the Mother was trying to manifest four overmental Godheads: Aspiration, Adoration, Faith and Purity. Tirupati was to embody Faith.

undesirable, but now not to speak might be dangerous.

Disciple: Can it, in any way, be retarded by us?

Sri Aurobindo: From the very highest standpoint it is all settled and your 'yes' or 'no' matters little. From another standpoint you have to see all the obstacles and take proper account of them in yourself. There is a middle standpoint — the mean, so to say — in which you can take it like this: the Higher Power is coming down and you have to receive it and, as I said, you can make it easy or difficult for it to come down.

Disciple: How can we do that?

Sri Aurobindo: By aspiration, and then by an opening which allows it in you. Also by keeping yourself aware of the obstacles in your own nature and asking the Power to remove them. You must be wide awake to these things.

♎

9 NOVEMBER 1926

Disciple: Do you promise that the world of the Gods will descend?

Sri Aurobindo: I don't promise anything. "If the Supramental comes down," that is what I say.

Disciple: Can it be obstructed by us?

Sri Aurobindo: No. Yet you can help it.

Disciple: Would it not create a noise in the world?

Sri Aurobindo: You must not expect to make noise. It is a *silent* work. Publicity would attract hostile forces. You can take up external work only when it is *in* you: when you are doing the Sadhana in the mind then outer activities like the *Arya* and writing, etc., can go on. But when I came down to the vital I stopped all that.

Disciple: Is it true that the Higher Power has no human considerations for the Adhar in which it descends, because for the Power it does not seem to matter if the Adhar breaks?

Sri Aurobindo: The best is to have the Mahasaraswati and Maheshwari aspects working. Formerly I used to work in that way. Many would not be able to bear Mahakali — only a few can pull with impunity. All the four aspects have to be harmonised in us. The ideal condition is to have in front any one aspect of the Power that is necessary for action, with the three others behind it.

Disciple: What would be the significance of the Supermind to humanity?

Sri Aurobindo: What it will mean to mankind may be known later on, not now.

ॐ

NOVEMBER 1926

Summary based on some talks before 24th November about the descent of the Gods.

Sri Aurobindo: There is the Supreme beyond description, who manifests himself as Sat, Chit, Ananda; in this Sat is the universal individuality of beings. Then comes the Supermind with its four Maha Shaktis, great powers. In the Supermind unity is the governing principle.

Then comes the world of the Gods, below the Supermind and behind the manifestation. The Gods of the Hindu culture — Shiva, Vishnu, etc. — are names and representations in the mind, but they point to the Gods who represent the Divine Principles governing the manifestation of the universe. There is a hierarchy of these beings.

Below this is the manifested universe. The purpose of this manifestation is to go back to the Ananda.

The Devas and the Asuras — the Gods and the Titans — manifest in man to lead this world or creation to the goal. The Devas manifest to effect a new principle or bring about a change.

The Avatar does not come to do that kind of work, i.e., the work of the Gods. He comes to uphold the Dharma. Some beings also come with him for the purpose.

In T s case the higher being marked him out as a possible instrument, but his own conditions were not ready. The internal being must be awake and conscious of the connection and the surface-being should not stand in the way — then everything is all right. But if the surface-being is egoistic then there is a crash.

The world of the Gods is above the psychic world. When one says an *arhsa* — portion — of a God manifests in a certain man, it is the man who develops into that God. The Gods do not evolve; they are principles or powers of the Divine. The Gods preside over the universe, they bring their qualities and powers to change the world.

In T's case there was a grand, magnificent being. It brought a change even in the physical for a moment. It came and went.

The Asura suggests pride and ruin at any cost.

A Supramental being comes down to bring a change, not to make noise.

I am trying to bring down the Supramental; things will happen, conditions for its descent will be created. Then there will be no obscurity in the vital or the physical. From the highest standpoint the coming of the Supramental is decided, you can't stand in the way. From the standpoint where we are working, it is an advantage to be aware of the difficulties and to take account of them, and deal with them. The middle path is to know that it is coming and you can make the process more or less smooth.

The Supramental is coming into the world and is bringing on a provisional order — not yet the true order. It rushes where there is an opening. If the opening closes and the hostile forces arise, it may utilise the hostile forces in spite of themselves. There are disturbances in the atmosphere due to wrong ways. Some can pull the Power with impunity.

There will be some effect on humanity, but humanity is not the only consideration in creation. Supermind is not yet a part of manifestation. Its effect on man will depend upon what is thrown away and what is retained when it is established in our midst. Above the movement of forces it is already intended, but is not evident. In the movement of forces the decision to accept the Supermind is not yet there.

THE 15TH OF AUGUST
1923-1926

15 AUGUST 1923

On the 6th of August, when asked about celebrating his birthday, Sri Aurobindo had said, "What is the significance of the fifteenth? I want to make it as ordinary as any other day. What has it to do with the stomach? It has an inner significance, and if there is a way of celebrating it in a fitting manner I have no objection. I do not want any sort of vital manifestation on that day, especially after I have taken a new turn in Yoga."

The food served today was the usual fare. The following is the substance of what he spoke in the afternoon.

Sri Aurobindo: Formerly we used to celebrate the event of my physical birth in a 'Vital' manner. There was the seed of the inner Truth in it, but the manifestation was vital. Now, I wish that if the day is observed, it should be in keeping with the Truth it symbolises.

You all know of the Supramental Truth that has to descend into our life. This day that Truth is symbolised. But there are several obstacles in the way of its coming down. There is the Mind and the mental ideas that grasp at the Truth coming from Above and try to utilise the Truth for their own aims. There is, for instance, the Vital, or the Life-force, which seizes upon the Higher Force and wants to throw itself out into impure actions. The Truth that is coming down is not mental, it is Supramental. In order that it may be able to work properly, all the lower instruments must be supramentalised. The lower forces want to utilise this Higher Truth for the satisfaction of their ordinary movements. Whenever a man enjoys the pleasures of life, or spends his life in pursuit of his selfish ends, it is, really speaking, these universal forces that take enjoyment through and in

him.

In order that this Higher Truth may be able to work in its purity, one has to open oneself to the greater Power above, to give oneself up to it and remove all that stands in the way of the Higher Truth. The capacity to surrender consists in these three things.

I have been working all these years to meet the obstacles and remove them and prepare and clear the path so that the task may not be very difficult for you. As for my helping you in that task it all depends upon your capacity to receive the help. I can give any amount that you can take. There is an idea that today every sadhaka gets a new experience. That depends upon your capacity to receive the Truth in yourself. Real spiritual surrender is, of course, quite another matter; but if any of you have experienced even a degree of it, even some faint reflection, then the purpose of the 15th will have been served.

96

15 AUGUST 1923 (EVENING)

Sri Aurobindo came out at 6 o'clock in the evening.

Disciple: May we know something about the present state of your Sadhana?

Sri Aurobindo (*in a clear but low voice*)**:** I cannot call it a state, or a condition. It is, rather, a complex movement. I am at present engaged in bringing the Supermind into the physical consciousness, down even to the sub-material. The physical is by nature inert and does not want to be rendered conscient. It offers much greater resistance as it is unwilling to change.

One feels as if "digging the earth", as the Veda says. It is literally digging from Supermind above to Supermind below. The being has become conscious and there is constant movement up and down.

The Veda calls it "the two ends" — the head and the tail of the dragon completing and compassing the consciousness. I find that so long as Matter is not supramentalised, the mental and the vital also cannot be fully supramentalised. The physical is therefore to be accepted and transformed. It is this birth after birth on every plane that makes the process complex. I am trying to bring the highest layer of the Supermind into the physical consciousness.

There are three layers of the Supermind corresponding to the three activities of the Intuitive Mind. First is what I call the Interpretative Supermind. I call it interpretative because what is a possibility on the mental plane becomes a potentiality on the Supramental plane. The Interpretative Supermind puts all the potentialities before you. It shows the root cause of events that may come true on the physical plane. When Intuition is changed into its Supramental value, it becomes Interpretative Supermind.

Next comes what I call the Representative Supermind. It represents the actual movements of the potentialities and shows what is in operation. When Inspiration is changed into its Supramental value then it becomes this Representative Supermind. This is not the highest Supermind. You know certain potentialities are working and in many cases you can say what would happen, or how a certain thing happened or can happen. But there may be no certainty. Finally there is the Imperative Supermind which corresponds to Revelation. It is always true as nothing can stand against it. It is Knowledge fulfilling itself by its own inherent power.

I have to distinguish between all these and try to bring down the Imperative Supermind into the physical. Thus, there is a constant movement up and down. The whole being is now made conscious, but what is required is that no force should be able to attack the physical. Then the second thing is to apply the Imperative Supermind to things within and, thirdly, to apply it to things outside. At present, by the Supramental Power any force that

attacks the body can be thrown aside. But when the process is complete, no conscious hostile force would be able to attack the body at all. In all this I am following a certain programme that was laid down for me when I came down to Pondicherry.

Disciple: The question, then, is of physical immortality.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, in case the physical is rendered immune, the casting away or retaining of the body would be voluntary. One would be free to throw it away; it would be, really, dull and monotonous to be forced to keep the same body through all eternity.

Disciple: Is it possible to illustrate the difference between what one attains in the Mind and what is attained in the Supermind?

Sri Aurobindo: I can give one instance: The mental *samatā* I attained was not disturbed for months by anything. It was the *samatā* of the Shankarite outlook. But true spiritual *samatā* comes when the Imperative Supermind descends; the self-certainty of the Power brings the true divine *samatā*.

Formerly there was some difficulty in differentiating between will of knowledge and knowledge-will — say, between force and knowledge. Now it is not there.

Disciple: When will this work be finished?

Sri Aurobindo: There can be no definite time-limit.

Disciple: What was the nature of the attack you got last?

Sri Aurobindo: Whenever I am about to finish a definite stage in Sadhana, the conscious hostile forces come and first raise up anything in the being and show it to me: "Look here, this you have not conquered." They can also attack.

Disciple: Is this idea of Supermind present in the Veda?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, it is very clear, though the emphasis of the Vedic Rishis is more on going above, ascending, than on the return movement of conquering and transforming the lower nature.

Disciple: Can one say that the idea of conquest of the physical is also there?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, the idea is definite.

Disciple: Do you know of any man who has brought down the Supermind to the physical plane?

Sri Aurobindo: No, I don't.

Disciple: Is there any stress in the Gita on bringing the Supermind down?

Sri Aurobindo: No. Its insistence is on Karma, on action, not so much on the Supermind. Besides, many other things are there in the Gita.

96

15 AUGUST 1924

Who can describe this day? Nothing can be added by the colours of imagination, poetic similes, and loaded epithets. It is enough to say, "It was the 15th of August." No other day can come up to it in the depth and intensity of spiritual action, the ascending movement of the flood of emotions, and the way in which each individual here was bathing in the atmosphere.

It is the supreme sign of the Master to assume all possible relations with his disciples, make them real, and concrete. Each disciple knows him as his own, and each the Master accepts as his. Each believes the Master loves him most and it is true that he loves each the most. This feeling is not an illusion or delusive self-hypnotism, but is quite real. The spontaneous dynamic law of the Supreme Truth which he embodies is Love — Divine Love.

In all the inmates the delight of surrender is overflowing — the bliss of surrender — its sparkle pervades all. All is given up,

everything is surrendered. How free you feel! How light and unburdened you feel! There is someone to take up the whole of your burden — there is a power of Supreme Love. Him you can trust implicitly. You need only to give up your little self, the rest is his work, you have no worry, no anxiety! No effort — only the way of loving surrender! How easy!

Every face is beaming with the joy of surrender, every one is happy and overflowing with joy. And yet there is no external reason, no outer materials for this intense joy. From where is flowing this unlimited Delight? They say the Master was not in such a happy mood these two or three years.

From early morning the Ashram is humming with various activities: decoration, flowers, garlands, food, bath, etc. All are eager to go up to the Master for his Darshan. As the time passes there is a tide in the flood of rising emotion. It is 'Darshan' — we see him every day, but today it is 'Darshan'! Today each sees him individually, one after another. In the midst of these multiple activities the consciousness gets concentrated. Today is 'Darshan' — not of a human being but of some Supreme Divinity. Today is the rare chance of seeing the Divine.

(*At 9.15, Sri Aurobindo came out to the verandah which had been decorated today with jasmine garlands and with lotuses which had been brought from a long distance*.)

There he sits — in the royal chair in the verandah — royal and majestic. In the very posture there is divine self-confidence. In the heart of the Supreme Master, the great Yogin — a sea of emotions is heaving — is it a flood that mounts from or a flood that is coming down on humanity? Those alone who have experienced it can know something of its divinity. Those who have bathed in it once can never come out of that ocean. He sits there — with pink and white lotus garlands. It is the small flower-token of the offerings by the disciples. Hearts throb, prayers, requests, emotions pour forth —

and a flood of blessings pours down carrying all of them away in its speed. Lack of faith, doubts, get assurance. All human needs the Divine fulfils and, after fulfilling, his Grace overflows. Love and Grace flow on undiminished. The look! — the enrapturing and captivating eyes! Who can ever forget? — pouring love and grace and ineffable divinity. If some transcendent Divinity is not here, where else can he be?

He is usually an embodiment of Knowledge. But today he is different. He is all Love. Here is the Great Poet and the Supreme Lover incarnate! It is inquiring, loving and blessing in a glance! Man does wonders with his eyes and looks, but to do so much Divinity is needed.

The question is what to ask? love or blessings? or, should one pray for love and blessings both and in addition for the acceptance of unworthy persons like us? Standing on the brink of Eternity when the soul saw his dreamy and loving eyes, then was it captured for ever. The inexplicable mystery of Divine Love was here a tangible experience! Who can explain a fact? A fact is a fact and an experience an experience. There is no explanation possible.

"What should I give him?" is the question of the mind. "What should I ask?" is the question of the heart. Both refuse to answer and both are unanswered. The mind feels the insignificance of its offering, and remains mute. The heart is ashamed because of its beggars attitude; it even feels its pride wounded. How to solve this pleasant embarrassment? The beggar heart carries the day. There is even a kind of curiosity to find out how one is accepted, what happens to oneself.

But all this was before Darshan. As one actually stands in front, all curiosity, all pride, all thoughts, all questions, all resolutions are swept away in some terrific divine Niagara. Thou, embodiment of Love Supreme! what transparency! In the heart of the Supreme Master also, an ocean of emotion is heaving. The heart melts and falls at his feet without knowing, it surrenders itself! Where is here

a place for speech? There is only one speech — the language of the body and its flexion, that of the prostration of the body in the act of surrender, throbbing of the heart and that of the flow of tears from the eyes! What a peace pregnant with divinity! What a beauty of this experience!

Everyone is trying to maintain *samatā.* Everyone is quiet and is trying hard to remain calm. But today all the barriers of humanity are swept away by the flood of Divine Love. The soul has its *samatā* but the whole nature is in agitation as unknown waters have rushed into it. Knowledge is laid on the shelf — and it is all a flood of love. Today the soul has received the certitude of the Divine's Victory as it had never done before.

In the dining room all are gathered, bathing and bathed in delight. Everyone is happy — supremely happy—in perfect ecstasy. Today there is an empire of Delight! O Artist! what a marvellous art! So much of delight — for every one of them! — delight that fills each and overflows.

At four o'clock all gather at the usual place of sitting — the verandah. All sit there full of hope in silence; one or two whisper to each other. The mind of the company is silently repeating, "When will he come? May he come." It is 4:15; — the old familiar and yet new 'tick' behind the door! Slowly a door opens. The Master steps out first, behind him the Mother in a white creamy sari with broad red border. He sits in his usual broad Japanese chair. The Mother sits on the right side on a small stool. For a short time — about five minutes — there is complete silence!

Then he glances at each one separately. The minutes are melting into the silence. There is again a wave of emotion in all; all bathe again into an ocean of some divine emotion. How wonderful if the whole of Eternity would flow in this experience! Time, poor Time, its flow is blamed by men. But where is the fault in the flow of Time? If so much Love and such Divine Delight can have its play — let poor Time flow and have its Eternity! And let the world become

Divine! Another powerful aspiration that comes to the surface is: "Expression is not needed — let the whole of Eternity flow away in this silence!"

9

After remaining silent for about ten to fifteen minutes, Sri Aurobindo spoke for about thirty to thirty-five minutes. The following is the substance of what he spoke.

Sri Aurobindo: It has become customary to expect some speech from me on this day. I prefer to communicate through the Silent Consciousness, because speech addresses itself to the mind while through the Silent Consciousness one can reach something deeper. We are practising together a Yoga which is quite different in certain essentials from other methods which go by the same name. According to the old method we have to select the intellect, the emotion or the will or to differentiate between Purusha and Prakriti, the conscious Soul and Nature. By that we arrive at an Infinite of Knowledge, an all-Loving and all-Beautiful Supreme or an Infinite Impersonal Will, or the Silent Brahman beyond our mind, emotional being or will, or our individual Purusha.

Our Yoga does not aim at an impersonal Infinite of Knowledge, Will or Ananda, but at the realization of a Supreme Being, an Infinite Knowledge which is beyond the limited infinity of the human knowledge, an Infinite Power which is the source of our personal will and an Ananda which cannot be seized by surface movements of emotion.

This Supreme Being that we want to realize is not an impersonal Infinite but a Divine Personality; and in order to realize Him we have to grow conscious of our own true personality. You must know your own inner being. This Personality is not the inner mental, the inner vital and the inner physical being and its consciousness, as is many times wrongly described, but it is your true Being which is in direct communication with the Highest. Man

grows by gradual growth in Nature and each has to realize his own Divine Person which is in the Supermind. Each is one with the Divine in essence, but in nature each is a partial manifestation of the Supreme Being.

Such being the aim of our Yoga we want to return upon life and transform it. The old Yogas failed to transform life because they did not go beyond mind. They used to catch at mental experiences, but when they came to apply them to life they reduced it to a mental formula. For example, the mental experience of the Infinite or the application of the principle of universal Love.

We have, therefore, to grow conscious on all the planes of our being, and to bring down the Higher Light, Power and Ananda to govern even the most external details of life. We must detach ourselves and observe all that is going on in the nature — not even the smallest movement, the most external act must remain unnoticed. This process is comparatively easy in the mental and vital planes. But in the physico-vital and the physical plane the powers of Ignorance hold their sway and reign in full force, persisting in what they believe to be the eternal laws. They obstruct the passage of the Higher Light and hold up their flag. It is there that the powers of darkness, again and again, cover the being and even when the physico-vital is opened, the elements of ignorance come up from the lower levels of the physical being. To deal with them is a work of great patience. The physico-vital and the physical being do not accept the Higher Law and persist. They justify their persistence and their play by intellectual and other justifications and thus they try to deceive the sadhak under various guises.

Generally, the vital being is very impatient and wants to get things done quickly on the physico-vital and physical planes. But this has very violent reactions and therefore the mental and the vital being, instead of seizing upon the Higher Light and Power, should surrender themselves to the Higher Power. We have not to rest satisfied with partial transformation. We have to bring down the

Higher Power to the physical plane and govern the most external detail of life by it. Mind cannot govern them. We have to call down the Higher Light, Power and Ananda to transform our present nature. This requires an essential utter sincerity in every part of the being, which can see dearly all that is going on in the being and which wants only the Truth and nothing but the Truth.

The second condition of the Light coming down and governing even the smallest detail of life is that one must grow conscious of ones divine personality which is in the Supermind.

There is sometimes a tendency in the sadhak to be satisfied with experiences. One should not rest content with mere experiences.

Another thing is that here, as we are all of us together given to the pursuit of the same Truth the whole time, we have arrived at some kind of solidarity so that we can mutually help or retard our progress.

The conditions for the transformation of our being are the opening of ourselves to the Higher Light and an absolute surrender. This brings about the transformation, so that if there is the essential sincerity, the opening to the Light and surrender, and a gradual growth of consciousness on all the planes, we can become ideal sadhaks of this Yoga.

ॐ

15 AUGUST 1924 (EVENING)

At 6.30, when the Master came for the evening sitting emanating joy, he asked with a smile, "What do you want today? Silence or speech?" As if he had come to confer whatever boon we asked. For a time it was silence that reigned. Then from that silence a flow appeared to start. The hearts of the disciples were on tiptoe with expectation, for today they were hearing not human speech but

words from the Divine. To hear with human ears the Lord speak! What fulfilment!

Anticipating the question about his own sadhana, he asked X: "Do you want me to keep the tradition?"

Disciple: I was thinking of asking about your Sadhana, but I was afraid of being referred to the Silent Consciousness.

Sri Aurobindo: Do you then want me to speak about the Silent Consciousness like Carlyle who preached his doctrine of silence in 40 volumes?

Disciple: The difficulty is that by silent consciousness we can't find where you are.

Disciple: We want to know about your own Sadhana.

Sri Aurobindo: All I can say is I am doing the same thing over and over again; only I am doing it each time better.

Disciple: That is a very encouraging discovery.

Disciple: That is known to us.

Sri Aurobindo: Is it? I thought it is quite fresh. The physical layer is a very obstinate thing and it requires to be worked out in detail. You work out one thing, then think it is done; something else arises and you have again to go over the same ground. It is not like the mind or the vital where it is easier for the Higher Power to work. Besides there — in the mind and in the vital — you can establish a general law leaving out the details; the physical is not so, it requires constant patience and minutiae.

Disciple: In the vital you feel you are galloping like a horse.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, there is a sense of movement and success in the vital, but the physical always denies your achievements and repeats the same thing over again, so there is hardly much that can be spoken about it.

Disciple: What are the signs by which one can know that the

higher calm has settled in the physical?

Sri Aurobindo: In part or in the whole?

Disciple: In the entire range of the physical.

Sri Aurobindo: But before the higher calm can settle there, you must grow conscious of the physical.

Disciple: How?

Sri Aurobindo: As you have got the consciousness of the mind, of the vital being, so also the body must get its own consciousness. When that consciousness is present, you feel the calm like something solid, settled like an immovable block which cannot be shaken even by the most material shock.

Disciple: In your present stage of Sadhana where do you stand with regard to the question of Death?

Sri Aurobindo: In my own case?

Disciple: Yes.

Sri Aurobindo: There are three things that can bring it about:

1. Violent surprise and accident.

2. Action of age.

3. My own choice, finding it not possible to do it this time, or by something shown to me which would prove it is not possible this time.

Disciple: Sometimes I have a suggestion that if the body can retain the higher calm, power, and ananda, then the body would be free from death.

Sri Aurobindo: That is only the general principle. But that won't do on the physical plane. You must work out all the details. It is just like the political movements of India where to establish a general rule or maxim is regarded as quite sufficient; the details are never worked out.

Disciple: When the vital being has got the calm and power and ananda then sometimes there is an idea that the body is also immortal.

Sri Aurobindo: That is due to the vital casting its own glow upon the physical. The vital Purusha is immortal and that creates a sense of immortality in the body, but that is not the real conquest. In the case of Swami Brahmananda, he lived up to 300 years so that he seemed practically immune from the action of age, but one day a rusty nail pricked him and he died of that slight wound. On the physical plane something you have not worked out turns up and shows that your conquest is not complete. That is why the process takes such a long time. You must establish the Higher Consciousness in every atom of the body; otherwise what happens is that something escapes your view in the hidden depth of the lower physical being which is known to the hostile forces and then they can attack through that weak point. They can create a combination of circumstances which would give rise to the thing not worked out and before you can control them they are already beyond control. In that case they can destroy you.

Disciple: Why is the physical so very obstinate and obscure?

Sri Aurobindo: Well, it is the nature. That is the arrangement. If the physical were not like that then the thing would have been done much more easily and long ago instead of taking *kalpas* and *manvantaras.* The Sadhana would have been very easy. God does not want it to be easily done.

Disciple: Some time back you told us that this attempt was done several times in the past, but on account of various reasons it was not successful. Will it be successful this time or not?

Sri Aurobindo: I can't say.

Disciple: But you said that this can be done and this time something will be done.

Sri Aurobindo: But "this can be done" is not the same as "this

will be done this time".

Disciple: No. What he wants to know is whether you want to improve upon that statement.

Sri Aurobindo: All I can say is "Ask me next August." This time I am more hopeful than I was last year. It is more possible now than it was last year. Last year was a very hard year in my sadhana. There was an attack from the darkest physical forces on me. This year they are all gone.

Disciple: When will it be finished?

Sri Aurobindo: You want me to prophesy? It does not depend totally upon me; time is the last thing one knows about. And fixing the limit is more likely to prolong it — like "Swaraj in one year". Besides, a Yogin who is to take part in action is not shown everything by the Supreme. Only when the universal conditions are ready then all things are shown to him; one who is detached sees many things more. Also, the Supreme does not decide every detail before the universal conditions are ready for it to come down with an imperative decision. In between, it is all a working of universal forces. For example, take the case of a physical disease to which you are prone by nature. When you have worked it out you find the same thing coming up in other forms. You cannot leave it off without working out all details and in each detail you can see only possibilities and moral certainties. Not that the Supreme does not know it all the time; only, it does not interfere till the universal conditions are ready. The decision which the universal forces work out is also the decision of the Supreme.

Disciple: Are the universal conditions fulfilled so far as the physical is concerned?

Sri Aurobindo: The general conditions have been fulfilled in the case of the physical consciousness; but now the most material level remains and that is the most dangerous.

Disciple: Why is it most dangerous?

Sri Aurobindo: Because it is solid, compact, and can refuse or give up its own stuff completely. It is the least open to reasoning and in dealing with it you require the highest Divine Power. Besides, the whole *saṁskarā*, established impressions, of the whole universe is against your effort. Something from Above has to descend and remove the obstacle.

Disciple: I have an idea that those who go by the gradual way would also, at some time, come to the same conquest of the physical as those who work in the concentrated way.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. But those who go by the gradual way may have each time to fight out the whole thing and even then the difficulty comes up again and again, while in the involved process (which I am following) the work is rendered easy and quick. One blow from the Supreme Force and the thing is done!

69

15 AUGUST 1925 (4.30 P.M.)

Sri Aurobindo: Our Yoga aims at the discovery of the Supramental being, the Supramental world, and the Supramental nature, and their manifestations in life. But we must guard ourselves against certain general mistakes which are likely to arise. People think that certain powers such as Anima, Garima, or the control of the physical functions, and the capacity to cure diseases, constitute the Supramentalised physical. In many cases, these powers are acquired by persons who happen to open themselves consciously, or unconsciously, to the subliminal being where these powers lie. There are plenty of cases where such powers are seen in persons who have no idea of the Supermind or Yoga.

There is an idea that this Yoga has been attempted times without number in the past, that the Light descended and has withdrawn

again and again. This does not seem to be correct. I find that the Supramental physical body has not been brought down; otherwise it would have been there. We must not therefore belittle our effort and throw obstacles in the way of its accomplishment.

The time has not yet come to say what would be the nature of the ultimate transformation. What the old yogins manifested in their life was largely due to the control of the vital being over physical functions. Our aim is not this attainment of the vital siddhis — the control of the physical substance and functions through vital forces. What we are attempting to achieve is a complete transformation of our entire being in all its planes of manifestation. In the old disciplines the goal was not transformation or victory over the physical being. They did not lay any direct hold on it.

Then there is an idea that since everything is One, what we have to do is to realise the One Consciousness and have some experience of it on various planes of our being. This is a mistake due to obsession with Vedantic ideas. It is true that there is the One Consciousness and we have to realise it, but we have not to stop short with that realisation. We have, as I said just now, to transform our entire being.

There is an idea that our Yoga is an attempt at conscious evolution. The Spirit is here involved in Matter and appears subject to it. By the process of evolution the vital and the mental being have come into manifest existence here. Our effort is to evolve to the Supermind from mind.

The Taittiriya Upanishad speaks of the physical being taken up into the vital, and that into the mental and that again into the Supramental and Ananda Consciousness. Another Upanishad says that the man who attains the Supermind escapes through "the door of the Sun". There is no idea of a conscious descent upon life after ascending to the Supermind.

But it is possible to regard the process as an involution, — involution of the manifested being into the Truth-Consciousness of the Supermind which descends with the perfection of the same into the mind, into the vital and into the physical being.

We also notice in our Sadhana that there is a movement of ascent. But that is not the whole thing; we have not to rest content merely with the ascent. We have also to descend again and consciously bring down the Supramental Light, Truth and Harmony to govern and transform our nature — that is, our mind, life, and body. There is thus an evolution of the lower powers upward into the Truth from which the Spirit descends into Matter and then a manifestation of that Truth in all the nature.

It is not all who can do this. There is an idea that everybody can do this Yoga, but that is only partly true. All are not called to do this Yoga. It may be said that all men have got a latent capacity for this Yoga. But that only helps them up to the point of a certain preparation for the Yoga. The vast mental expansion, the difficult, long and arduous task of rejecting the lower movements of the vital nature and the still harder task of bringing about a change in the physical being, all this cannot be attempted by all. We want first to transform all our being into the Supramental nature. But that is not all, we have to call down and throw that Power upon the external life and establish the Truth and harmony there also. I have already told you that the time has not yet come to say what would be the nature of the ultimate transformation. When the time comes it will reveal itself. What is demanded of you is to open yourself more and more to the Truth. As to all the rest, it will work itself out according to the will of the Supreme Ishwara.

ॐ

15 AUGUST 1925 (EVENING)

Sri Aurobindo came out at 7 o'clock.

Sri Aurobindo: Anybody going to keep up the tradition?

Disciple: We are only waiting for the signal.

Sri Aurobindo: The whistle is given, you can start.

Disciple: We want to know something about your Sadhana.

Sri Aurobindo (*in Bengali*)**:** *Āmār sādhanā*? *Āmi ki sādhanā korchi*? [*My Sadhana*? *Am I doing Sadhana*?] Ask some other question.

Disciple: From your experience of the physical plane till now, do you think that it is possible to bring down the Supermind into the physical plane?

Sri Aurobindo: Why not? I would not attempt it if it were not possible. If you mean, by that question, "whether it is possible this time and now", then that is quite another matter.

Disciple: That is what I mean.

Sri Aurobindo: It all depends upon things outside myself. It is to be seen whether the physical plane is ready to receive the Light, for it is not always that the physical plane is ready when the Light descends.

Disciple: Can you not give any certainty about it?

Sri Aurobindo: I never said it was certain.

Disciple: Last year when this question was put to you...

Sri Aurobindo: What did I say?

Disciple: You said, "Ask me next August."

Disciple: When the question was put to you, you said, "It is more possible this year than it was last year."

Sri Aurobindo: That is quite another matter. I could not have used the other expression. I can say now, "It is more possible this

year than it was last year." (*All burst out into laughter as he evaded the question.*)

I am not joking. There have been manifestations of it now that were not there before. The Power is working more directly on the physical plane.

Disciple: Then can you not give the certainty?

Sri Aurobindo: *You* can give the certainty, instead of me, I can't. You can see for yourself.

Disciple: If I could see I would not have asked you.

Sri Aurobindo: Then, you want to throw the whole burden on me and evade your responsibility?

Disciple: If you push me like that into a corner then I can't say anything.

Sri Aurobindo: Well, you want the truth from me and not a pleasant falsehood, I suppose. I have been feeling this very strongly for the last two days, that is why I say this. It is not a personal question; I am speaking of the general atmosphere. I find that the more the Light and Power are coming down the greater is the resistance. You yourself can see that there is something pressing down. You can also see that there is a tremendous resistance.

Disciple: This is quite a new thing this time.

Disciple: It is not at all new. It is only expressed this time.

Sri Aurobindo: Now that we have all come to the lower vital and the physical planes where the struggle is most acute, I am speaking from there and not from any higher standpoint.

(*After a pause, to a disciple*) No, K — you can't evade your responsibility. (*Laughter*)

I am not doing an isolated Yoga. When I wrote that much-abused sentence about humanity in *The Yoga and its Objects*, there was a truth behind it though I was not conscious of it. It is true that

my Yoga is not for humanity; but it is not for myself either; of course, my attaining to the Siddhi is the preliminary condition to others being able to attain it. If I were seeking my own liberation and perfection, my Yoga would have been finished long ago.

Disciple: You said in your speech in the afternoon that the physical plane had not been worked upon by anyone before.

Sri Aurobindo: I did not say that no attempt had been made in the past. Attempts were made, but nothing stable was attained on the physical level; nothing fundamental was established. If it were established, the thing would be there, however partial the achievement.

You see, however imperfect the achievement, it is there in the Mind and you find it, so also in the Vital. But you find nothing like that in the physical plane.

Disciple: It means that the necessary atmosphere for bringing down the Supermind on the physical plane is to be created?

Sri Aurobindo: That is the whole attempt. You ought to help in it by creating the necessary condition, if you want it to be done this time.

(*Pointing to himself*) There is the centre. You can take from it. But we must be all on the same side if we want to succeed. If you give room to hostile suggestions, you retard your own progress and also the general advancement.

Disciple: What should be done to reduce the resistance of the physical nature?

Sri Aurobindo: You must have an integral aspiration for the Truth. It is true, of course, that there come times in the Sadhana when the mind gets depressed, and the higher Presence is veiled, the knowledge obscured. At that time it is the aspiration and the faith — what Ramakrishna calls 'blind faith' — that supports one. That faith is not, really speaking, blind. It is the memory of the soul.

If faith is necessary to Coué-out a disease, much more is it necessary to bring down the Supermind. If I had lost faith I would have given up the effort long ago.

Disciple: Anybody else would have given it up long ago. (*Laughter*)

Disciple: Is the transition from the Mind to the Supermind more radical in its nature than that from the Supermind to the planes above it?

Sri Aurobindo: What do you mean by that? Do you mean is it as decisive a step as from Ignorance to Knowledge?

Disciple: Yes.

Sri Aurobindo: You see, the Mind works on the basis of division. It always takes the truth piecemeal, — one aspect at a time, and acts as if a part were the whole. Now this very basis is false.

The Supermind is unity and on the basis of that unity it knows the division. It is the stage nearest to us towards the Divine. Of course, it is also working in the Mind. But in the Mind you seek and find the Truth partially. Mind is an effort at knowing, but not knowledge. Mind only represents, it cannot attain. It cannot fully express the Truth.

On the vital plane also the Supermind works. There its working is Instinct, a precise but covert working which is nearest to the Supermind. But the Supermind is something quite different. You may say it is something automatic though not in the mechanical sense. You can say it is self-active Truth. Once you attain to the Supermind, you can escape through "the doors of the Sun", if you want. If you go higher still, you come to a plane where no Sun is needed. But all that becomes more possible and easy if you can bring down the Supermind into the physical plane. After that, it is all a flowering up of the being, a natural and easy growth. But it is all a struggle here in mind, life and body.

The sign that you have attained to the Supermind is that you dispense with the need of thought, or thinking as we understand it. In the Supermind you do not need to think. It does not mean that there is no thought and that all is a mere blank. There is something self-existent that works.

Disciple: How?

Sri Aurobindo: "How" you can't understand.

Disciple: But how does the Mind work when there is no thought?

Sri Aurobindo: In the Mind you think from one point to another point and then to another and so on. Then you gather them all up and connect them in the relation of cause and effect. Now suppose all these hundred thoughts arise simultaneously, showing up all the details and all that in less than one second. Can you imagine that? That is the Supramental thought.

Disciple: I can imagine that.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, you can imagine, but you can't have an idea of the thing unless you experience it.

Disciple: Will you give us some other aspect of the Supermind?

Sri Aurobindo: Some other aspect? It is not a thing to be understood mentally like that.

Disciple: All the same it may be of some help to us.

Sri Aurobindo: For instance, absolute rest and absolute activity at the same time. Can you imagine that?

Disciple: Is it true that all the mental faculties have their corresponding counterparts in the Supermind?

Sri Aurobindo: Well, that is what I have said in the *Arya.* I wrote the *Arya* when I was on the borderland. I should not say the same thing now. Everybody has to go through that stage. It is true that corresponding to Reason there is what may be called the Divine

Reason; and you can say that what works as the Divine Reason is derived from the activity of the Supermind. But it is something which is quite different. I am putting the thing in terms of the mind. I can only give you images. But there it is not exactly the same thing. For instance, Reason finds out the cause and effect and connects them together — while the Divine Reason puts them all in the right relation.

There are other things which cannot be expressed in terms of the mind.

Disciple: For example?

Sri Aurobindo: Reconciliation between opposites. For example, absolute silence and absolute expression, can you express it in terms of the mind?

Disciple: When the Supermind will descend it will evolve its own language.

Sri Aurobindo: There is no need of language there; suppose you have got the Supermind and I have got it, we need not use any language.

Disciple: Then we will be sitting quiet all along?

Sri Aurobindo: A terrible thing to you, I suppose?

Disciple: In Bernard Shaw's *Back to Methuselah* there are 'ancients' who come and stay with those whom he calls 'children', ordinary men, and if they stay too long, the children get frightened.

Disciple: K is probably afraid that there would be no more questions to ask.

Disciple: In the Upanishad Yajnavalkya says to Gargi when she put too many questions, "Don't ask too many questions; otherwise your head will fall off."

Disciple: It would be a blessing if the head fell off.

Disciple: If this conquest of the physical plane is once achieved,

would it mean the defeat of the hostile forces in cases where there might be no opening to the Yoga?

Sri Aurobindo: You come back to the same question of humanity in another form. That is to say, you want to know whether this victory would mean universal victory. Well, let us wait and establish the thing on the physical plane first, then we shall see.

Disciple: How are the universal conditions more ready now for the coming down of the Supermind than they were before?

Sri Aurobindo: Firstly, the knowledge of the physical world has increased so much that it is on the verge of breaking its own bounds.

Secondly, there is an attempt all over the world towards breaking the veil between the outer and the inner mental, the outer and the inner vital and even the outer and the inner physical. Men are becoming more 'psychic'.

Thirdly, the vital is trying to lay its hold on the physical as it never did before. It is always the sign that whenever the Higher Truth is coming down, it throws up the hostile vital world on the surface, and you see all sorts of abnormal vital manifestations, such as increase in the number of persons who go mad, earthquakes, etc. Also, the world is becoming more united on account of the discoveries of modern science — the aeroplane, the railways, the wireless telegraph, etc. Such a union is the condition for the Highest Truth coming down and it is also our difficulty.

Fourthly, the rise of persons who wield tremendous vital influence over large numbers of men.

These are some of the signs to show that the universal condition may be more ready now. Of course we do not know anything about the conditions of the past attempts. But in so far as we can see now there are conditions to warrant the attempt.

Disciple: Do you consider the knowledge of the world-forces a necessary part of the Yoga?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes! You have to deal with world-forces because they make themselves felt, especially the hostile ones; and so also you have to know the forces that make for help. Even when one is doing individual sadhana, these universal forces make themselves felt. Of course, as you develop, their aspect changes completely. The movement of these world-forces does not begin on the lower planes. It begins high above. All decisions are made high above, it is true, but they are not allowed to be known on the planes to which they relate. A veil is interposed, and each plane is left free to make its own decision. The struggle is left to be decided over again by the contending forces. It is only when the decisive turn has been taken that the highest decision is made known. You can help the greater knowledge to grow in you by trying to get the lesser knowledge.

Disciple: What is our place in this Yoga?

Sri Aurobindo: Your place? What do you mean by the question?

Disciple: I can't explain it, I think.

Sri Aurobindo: You must put precise questions if you want precise answers.

Disciple: Probably he wants to know what is the responsibility of the sadhaks?

Disciple: Yes, I mean that.

Sri Aurobindo: But I simply said that as a joke, because K wanted to back out.

Disciple: But I took it seriously.

Sri Aurobindo: Well, I did not say it seriously, though there was something behind which was serious. (*Laughter*)

Disciple: This is the Supramental reconciliation of the opposites. (*Laughter*)

Sri Aurobindo: Well, you can help the attempt by one-pointed aspiration. You should reject everything that stands in the way of fulfilling this ideal. But, if instead of doing that, you go on accepting

the suggestions of the hostile forces and repeat their *mantras* which give you or others the idea that it is not possible, then you help the hostile forces.

Disciple: I will put one question.

Sri Aurobindo: It is time now, put it some other day.

ಌ

15 AUGUST 1926

Sri Aurobindo: I shall say a few words today about the 15th of August. The question was one that was recently put to me and I gave a negative answer in order to remove certain mental and conventional notions on the matter.

I shall now speak about the positive side of the matter. If there were not that other side there would be no use in this celebration. I shall not refer to the personal aspect for very obvious reasons, but I shall say something in general with regard to what it can and ought to mean in regard to the Yoga, the common object we all have in view.

What that object — that Yoga — is, you know in principle. It is the bringing down of a Consciousness, a Power, a Light, a Reality that is other than the consciousness which satisfies the ordinary man upon earth — a Consciousness, a Power and Light of Truth, a Divine Reality which is destined to raise the earth-consciousness and transform everything here.

That cannot take place unless there is a decision from Above. But, also, it cannot be done unless the earth-consciousness itself is in some part of it, in some of those who dwell here upon these lower planes, ready to receive. Once this Consciousness, the Power, descends it is there for all times and every day for those who are willing and fit to receive it.

But we have attached a special importance to this day and it is justified if we live in the light of the Truth it symbolises. For this day we can fix a mark in the stage of the individual and general progress. It is a day which ought to be a day of consecration, of self-examination and a preparation for future advance, if possible, for the reception of a special Power which would carry on the work of advance. This can only be done in each individually if he takes up the true attitude and lives on that day under the right conditions. That was what I meant when I spoke the other day. It is we who can make it a decisive day in this sense, and it is we who can help to fulfil it.

There must be a consecration from beforehand, and a looking inward on the past to see how far we have reached, what in us is ready, what in us has not yet changed and has yet to be changed, what stands behind waiting for a complete transformation; what still resists and what is still obscure. There must be the aspiration, a calling down of the Power to effect the change which we see to be necessary.

All this we cannot do if we throw ourselves out on this day, but only by an intense concentration so that the internal being is ready, and turned upwards to receive the Light. In proportion as we admit an externalising movement we disturb the higher working and waste the energy needed for the work of inner change. Whatever is done other than on ordinary days should be done either as a part of the movement itself, or as something which is held on the outskirts of the being and cannot disturb the inner movement. And all the customary circumstances of the day must be used for advance.

And if you came to me in the morning, it should not have been in fulfilment of a customary ceremony but with your souls and minds prepared to receive. If you listen to me now and if it is merely something that touches your mental interest and satisfies a mental interest I would rather remain silent. But if it touches somewhere the inner being, the soul, then only has this day a utility

or a purpose. And the meditation too ought to be done under such conditions that even if nothing decisive descends there would be a certain infiltration the results of which would come afterwards.

That is the one meaning of the 15th of August from the point of view of our Yoga.

As to taking stock of the work, where you are and the work, how far it is done, etc., certain things ought to be remembered. You know them with the mind.

First, remember that what are the objects of other yogas are for us only the first stages, or first conditions. In the former ways of Yoga men were satisfied if they could feel the Brahmic Consciousness or the Cosmic Consciousness or some descent of Light and Power, some intimation of the Infinite. It was thought sufficient if the mind got certain spiritual experiences and underwent a partial transformation and the vital being was in contact with it. They sought for a static condition and considered release as the final goal, the final aim.

To realise all this, to be open to the Infinite and Universal Power, to receive its intimations and to have experiences, to completely go beyond the ego, to realise the Universal Mind, Universal Soul, the Universal Spirit, that is only the first condition. We have to call down this greater Consciousness also into the vital and the physical beings, so that the supreme calm and universality will be there in all fullness from top to bottom. If this cannot be done then the first condition of transformation is not fulfilled.

The second thing we have to know and remember is that nothing is perfectly done unless all is perfectly done. It is not sufficient to open the mind and the vital being and leave the physical being to its obscurity.

So in the transformation also, the mind cannot be fully transformed unless the vital also is transformed. If the vital being is not transformed nothing can be realized; because it is the vital being

that realizes. And if the mind is only partially changed and if the vital being is open and also partially changed it is still not sufficient for our purpose. Because the whole range of the vital being cannot be changed unless the physical being also is opened and changed, for the divine vital cannot realize itself in an unfitting environmental life.

And it is not enough for the inner physical being to be changed if the external man is not transformed. In this process of Yoga there is a whole totality and each depends upon the other. Therefore to stop short may be a preparation for another life, but it is not the victory. All has to be changed before anything can be permanently changed.

The third thing to remember is that if all is to be changed and done then there must be complete surrender with no reservation in any part of the being, no compromise with the old customary thoughts and human ways of doing things. Wherever anything is reserved, it means the Truth is not accepted and we shall commit, again, the old mistake of partial achievement and transformation. We should leave no field for the indulgence of ignorance. For us there can be no compromise between falsehood and Truth, between the Supreme and the lower nature.

It is by remembering these things that we have to take stock of our work. To see how much is to be done, not in any spirit of pessimism because the way is long and hard and cannot be done by a miracle. It can only be accomplished by a large and thorough movement. Each step you have to take as a mark, as an encouragement, for a step towards the Beyond: on one side no lack of resolution and zeal for the victory to be won, on the other no hasty impatience or depression, but the calm certainty for the Divine Will, the calm will that "It shall be done in us" and the aspiration that "It may be done for us so that it may be done for the world."

15 AUGUST 1926 (EVENING)

Disciple: What would you say this time about the success of our efforts? Last time you said that you were certain about it.

Sri Aurobindo: I did not say that I was certain. Let us ask X for information.

Disciple (*to the first disciple*)**:** Why do you put a question in that way? You can put the question anew on your own account without referring to the past.

Disciple: From the general conditions prevailing now, can you not say whether you are sure or not?

Sri Aurobindo: I am sure and I am not sure.

Disciple: How?

Sri Aurobindo: I can say that I am morally sure but practically not sure. I am not sure practically because the material world is unrepentant. The chief obstacle which may prove to be insurmountable is the resistance of the material world.

Disciple: What do you mean by 'unrepentant'?

Sri Aurobindo: I mean that the material world does not care a jot for the Divine or the Divine Life.

Disciple: What do you mean by the resistance of the material world?

Sri Aurobindo: Its incapacity to open to something high, of conceiving something different from what it is accustomed to. I am referring to the obscurity and stupidity of the human being, if I may say so. When I speak of the resistance of the material world,

I do not mean the external material but the subtle material. There is the subtle and the external material and when I say that Matter is impenetrable, I mean that the subtle material has not

accepted the Truth, the material mind has not accepted the Higher Truth. The cells of the material body have a consciousness of their own and that consciousness has to open itself to the Truth. But the material mind does not believe in the divine possibility of transformation. And as I already said, for us nothing is done unless all is done.

Disciple: How are you morally sure?

Sri Aurobindo: Because I see more and more power coming down into the physical and the physical being is showing signs of awakening.

Disciple: But we know that once the Truth is accepted by the mind, then it presses upon the vital being and opens it to the Higher Truth. And when the vital has opened, it presses upon the physical being. So now as you say that the Power is coming down on the physical plane, does it not follow that it will overcome the resistance of the material plane in course of time and the rest will follow naturally?

Sri Aurobindo: It does not necessarily follow.

Disciple: Suppose the material being does not change?

Sri Aurobindo: If it does not, then it would become an insuperable obstacle.

Disciple: Is there no other obstacle to the success except the resistance of Matter?

Sri Aurobindo: No, practically none else.

Disciple: Does it mean that no obstacle will arise from the Asuric forces? I do not mean the Asuric vital world itself but the obstacles from the physical world backed by the Asuric.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. All this resistance of Matter is backed by the Asuric forces. But if Matter itself yields, then those forces do not count. I do not mean there would be no difficulty from them, but what I mean is that it would have only a secondary importance.

Disciple: What are the conditions to be fulfilled before the resistance can be overcome and have we any responsibilities in fulfilling them?

Sri Aurobindo: Conditions? It is more than I can say.

(*After a pause*) You would not understand it even if I were to say it.

Disciple: Let us hear it. We shall try to understand it.

Sri Aurobindo: Well, the condition is that if man could open a direct connection with the world of the Gods, then only it would be possible.

Disciple: I do not understand unless you explain every word of it.

Sri Aurobindo: So I said.

Disciple: Do you mean the lower or the higher Gods?

Sri Aurobindo: I mean *the Gods*, and not the vital gods nor the mental gods.

Disciple: But if the subtle physical accepts the Higher Truth?

Sri Aurobindo: It may have accepted in my case but that proves nothing. It does not mean that it is established in the universal or that it is fundamentally and radically changed.

Disciple: Will not the whole physical yield to it?

Sri Aurobindo: Of course, it is logically but not practically certain.

Disciple: But then is there no sign of it changing its attitude?

Sri Aurobindo: No, as yet there is no decisive sign of any change; but as more and more Power is descending into the physical, I may say that I am morally sure that the material will yield.

Disciple: If the laws of Matter change, will not Matter cease to

be Matter?

Sri Aurobindo: Why?

Disciple: Because certain laws define the nature of Matter.

Sri Aurobindo: What do you mean by laws? What you call laws are mere habits. If you change your habits you still remain yourself.

Disciple: Can a few persons by their sadhana change the laws of the material world?

Sri Aurobindo: We do not intend to change the external material being. Only, in certain cases where the man is open to the Higher Power, this change would take place and not in everybody's case. Its success would not mean success for all and equally for all.

Disciple: Is the attitude of humanity as a whole a factor for success or failure in the effort?

Sri Aurobindo: Of course, it does count for something, but it does not radically affect the issue.

Disciple: What is the difference between the physical mind and the material mind?

Sri Aurobindo: The material mind is a part of the physical.

Disciple: What is the physical?

Sri Aurobindo: As I have not got the same inspiration of the subject, I shall ask X to explain it.

(*After a pause*) I spoke about four things in the physical: (1) physical mind, (2) physical vital, (3) Matter proper, and (4) the Supermind in the physical.

The 'physical mind' is, so to say, that end of the mental being which comes in contact with the physical world. It is mind limited by matter, working without the help of ideas, looking only to the physical aspect of the world and taking things as they are. It does not go beyond that view. It depends upon the evidence and knowledge of the physical plane or the knowledge of the external

world, it depends upon the evidence of the senses.

The 'physical vital' is life limited by the material body — the life-force bound up in matter. It is life moving in the nervous system. It cannot exist apart from the material body. It is quite different from the vital being proper with its relative freedom. It is life subject to the laws of Matter. There is a tremendous power in matter also, but that is not life-force. Life-force is quite apart from the material world. It exists by itself and for itself and does not limit itself down to the material conditions. To the vital being, nothing, however fanciful and even idiotic, seems impossible. That is the grandeur of the vital being. When Napoleon said, "Nothing is impossible, erase the word 'impossible' from the dictionary," it was the vital being that was speaking through him. And it is true that the vital plane does not admit anything as impossible. It does not reject the higher possibilities as the material plane does.

Then comes the material plane proper. It is what the Europeans call the 'Inconscient'. But this matter which they say is inconscient has a tremendous force behind it. In fact it would be the decisive factor in this effort. If it can't be done this time, it has to be done some day — at some other time.

Disciple: It is apparent that there is great energy in matter.

Disciple: Matter and energy are one.

Sri Aurobindo: That is only an aspect of it which the scientist knows.

Disciple: If an atom were broken up, so much energy would be liberated that some scientists say it can blow up the whole world. And merely changing the position of the atoms in a substance, the properties of the substance entirely change. Is this energy you speak of in Matter a form of the same energy that the scientists speak of?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. What they know is only one aspect of it. For it is not merely force but has a consciousness of its own, also it can accept and reject things.

The material plane is dull, inconscient. It does not want to change. It does not want to establish anything. It is the same under all the material conditions, obeying the laws of Matter. Even up till now in the process of evolution Nature has taken thousands and thousands of years to effect this little change in Matter. And even then it has been effected always by some pressure from above, i.e., from the mental or the vital planes, but not by Matters own inherent power or strength or consent.

When the Vital began to press on the Physical it could not carry out its ideas of possibilities and impossibilities there. It established a kind of understanding a compromise with Matter and it had to accept the limitations of material life.

Disciple: You said that to overcome the resistance of the material plane is possible if one can open a direct connection with the plane of the Gods. Is there a method of attaining to that plane or does it come down of its own accord or is the work done for one by the Higher Power?

Sri Aurobindo: You have to get rid of the 'European' mentality in you for that. All of you are semi-demi Europeans in your mentality. It requires a definite decision to go beyond the mind and giving up human ways of looking at things. You must avoid the two opposite mistakes of accepting the vital powers as true Gods and of being bound by the materialistic attitude.

Disciple: But you said that all decisions are taken Above already before they are accomplished here in this world.

Sri Aurobindo: Long before they occur here.

Disciple: Then the decision as to whether the Truth is going to succeed on the material plane or not must have already been made?

Sri Aurobindo: It may be. But it may not be made known to you. Even if you know it, you have to work in the plane of Ignorance. Who can say? We do not know.

Disciple: We would lose all the interest if the decision were known beforehand.

Sri Aurobindo: Ignorance is bliss.

Disciple: The first person plural may not know, but I am asking about the first person singular.

Disciple: If the decision is there, then it is also decided whether it will succeed this time or not.

Sri Aurobindo: Decision where?

Disciple: There — Above.

Sri Aurobindo: I can say because I know the decision there, and there is not the slightest shadow of doubt that it will one day succeed: but the question is whether it will succeed through *us* and *our* endeavours.

Disciple: If it does not succeed this time, will the Light retire?

Sri Aurobindo: It may retire or it may wait. The question is whether the physical plane is ready to accept the Light. Each time up till now it has not accepted the Truth when it came.

Disciple: What do you mean by saying that the European mind is materialistic?

Sri Aurobindo: We mean by 'European materialism' the attitude that takes matter as the fundamental basis of evolution and the impossibility of accepting what it is not accustomed to.

I am not running down the European mind. It is fine in its own way, but we are trying to effect a decisive change in the physical being. The opposite mistake is also made by those Europeans who have left the materialistic formula binding down the mind to the acceptance of the laws of the physical being as final, the mistake of accepting the vital powers as the true Gods. For example, the people who do psychic research, mediumistic experiments, automatic writing, spirit-communication etc. are such people.

Disciple: Do you mean to say that the physical laws also will be changed?

Sri Aurobindo: What do you mean by a 'law'? What are called laws are mere habits of the physical being, as I have already told you.

Disciple: Will the human body be obliged to change?

Sri Aurobindo: It is not necessary that it should change. It would involve a change in the possibilities and capacities of functions of the physical being. It would not mean a change in the universal physical. It would take place only in the case of persons who are open to the Higher Power. Of course, it would be a miracle if the impenetrable were penetrated.

Disciple: Discoveries of science are not less miraculous today.

Sri Aurobindo: It is the material mind that requires the miracles. It believes in the miracles of the past but not in those of the future. It is satisfied when the miracle has become habitual.

DECEMBER 1938

10 DECEMBER 1938

Disciple: Why did you choose Pondicherry as the place for your Sadhana?

Sri Aurobindo: Because it was by an Adesh — a command from Above — I was asked to come here.

When I left Bombay for Calcutta I had asked Lele what I should do regarding my Sadhana. He kept silent for some time and replied, "Meditate at a fixed time and hear the voice in the heart." I did not hear the voice from the heart, but a different voice, and I dropped meditation at a fixed time because meditation was going on all the time. When Lele came to Calcutta and heard about it, he said that the Devil had caught hold of me. I said, "If it is the Devil, I will follow him."

Disciple: People say that *Yogic Sādhan* was written by the spirit of Keshab Sen?

Sri Aurobindo: Keshab Sen? When I was writing it, every time at the beginning and at the end the image of Ram Mohan Roy came before me. So perhaps, Ram Mohan has been changed to Keshab Sen.

Do you know the origin of the name Uttara Yogi?

Disciple: No, Sir.

Sri Aurobindo: There was a famous Yogi in the South who while dying said to his disciples that a Purna Yogi from the North would come down to the South and he would be known by his three sayings. The three sayings were those I had written to my wife. A Zamindar disciple of that Yogi found me out and bore the cost of the book *Yogic Sādhan.*

Disciple: Tagore never spoke at any time about Ramakrishna

and Vivekananda except recently when he wrote a very ordinary poem on Ramakrishna during his centenary. He used to tell girls that Ramakrishna used very often to deride women saying *kāmini kānchan* are the roots of bondage and still women worshipped him.

Sri Aurobindo: I understand that Ramakrishna used to say *kāma kānchan.* When the division came after his death one party said that he never uttered Kamini but Kama.

I don't think there was anyone in Brahmo Samaj with spiritual realization. Dwijendra Nath had something in him and Shiva Nath Shastri too, and perhaps Keshab Sen. Bejoy Goswami ceased to be a Brahmo.

Disciple: Lele had realization?

Sri Aurobindo: Of course, he had some, but as I said he had ambition and ego.

Disciple: It is said that Christ used to heal simply by a touch. Is it possible?

Sri Aurobindo: Why not? There are many instances of such cures; of course, faith is necessary. Christ himself said, "Thy faith has made thee whole."

Disciple: Is faith always necessary for such a cure?

Sri Aurobindo: No, cure can be done without faith, especially when one does not know what is being done. Faith is above the mind so that any discussion or dispute spoils the action of the faith.

Disciple: I knew also such instances of cure or help by faith. When I came to see you first, you told me to remember you in my difficulties. After I returned I did so and I passed through all the difficulties, but as soon as I came here I heard many things from sadhaks and did not get the same result. I thought, perhaps, I was not able to open myself to you.

Sri Aurobindo: That is called simple faith, or as some call it, 'blind faith'. When Ramakrishna was asked about faith, he said,

"All faith is blind otherwise there is no faith." He was quite right.

Disciple: Is it because there is something in the nature of environmental influence that doubt comes or because one does not get the same result as before?

Sri Aurobindo: Both. The physical mind has these things — doubt, etc. — and they come up at one time or another. And by contact with other people also faith gets obscured. I know a shocking instance in the Ashram. A truthful man came here. A sadhak told him that speaking the truth always is a superstition. One must be free to say what one likes. And then there is another instance of a sadhak who said that sex-indulgence is no hindrance to Yoga, it can be allowed and everyone must have his Shakti. When such ideas are prevalent no wonder that they cast a bad influence on others.

Disciple: Such people ought to be quarantined.

Sri Aurobindo: I thought of that but it is not possible. Mother at one time tried to impose some restrictions and regulations but it did not work. One has to change from within. There are, of course, other yogic systems which have such strict regulations. Buddhism is unique in that respect. There is a monastic school in France — *La Trappe* — which enjoins strict silence.

Disciple: Is such exterior imposition good?

Sri Aurobindo: It can be good provided one sincerely keeps to it. For instance, in that monastery in France, people who enter there know what they want and so keep to the regulations that are meant to help them in achieving their aim.

The world has to change — people here are epitomes of the world. Each one represents a type of humanity and if one type is conquered that means a great victory for the work. And for this change a constant will is required. If that is there, lots of things can be done for the sadhaks as they were done before.

Disciple: Things became sluggish afterwards.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, it is when the Sadhana came down into the physical and the subconscient that things became very difficult. I myself had to struggle for two years; for the subconscient is absolutely inert, like a stone. Though my mind was quite awake above, it could not exert and influence down below. It is a Herculean labour, for when one enters there, it is a sort of unexplored continent. Previous Yogis came down to the vital. If I had been made to see it before, probably, I would have been less enthusiastic about it. That is an instance of blind faith! The ancients were quite right perhaps in leaving out the physical, but if I had left off there, the real work would have remained undone. And once the physical is conquered, it becomes easy for people who come after me, which is what is meant by "realization of one in all".

Disciple: Then we can wait for that victory!

Sri Aurobindo: You want an easy path!

Disciple: Not only easy but like a baby we want to be carried about. Is it possible?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, but one has to be a baby — and a genuine baby.

Disciple: Ramakrishna has said a Yogi need not be always like a drawn sword.

Sri Aurobindo: When did he say that and what did he mean by that? A Yogi has always to be vigilant, especially in the early part of ones sadhana. Otherwise all one has gained can come down with a thud. People here usually don't make Sadhana the sole preoccupation of their life. They have two parts: one, the internal and the other the external, which goes on with ordinary movements, social contacts, etc. Sadhana must be made the one central thing.

Disciple: You spoke about the brilliant period of the Ashram.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, it was when Sadhana was going on in the vital and when it is that, everything is joy, peace, etc. and if we had stopped there, we could have started a big religion, or something like it. But the real work would have been left undone.

Disciple: Why did you retire? To concentrate more on your work?

Sri Aurobindo: No, to withdraw from the physical atmosphere. If I had to do the work the Mother is doing, I would have hardly time to do my own work; besides its becoming a tremendous labour.

Disciple: Vishuddhananda of Benaras is said to be able to produce all sorts of perfumes, scents, etc. for which he is known as *gundhibābā.*

Sri Aurobindo: It is difficult to know if they are all materialisations or subtle perfumes projected into the physical or on the senses.

Paul Brunton saw always some pressure accompanying him. When he saw my photo, it had nothing to resemble it but when he saw me at the Darshan, he at once recognized me as that pressure.

Disciple: Why does one rise and fall physically during meditation?

Sri Aurobindo: It is not the physical but the vital body separating itself from the body. At one time I thought physical Siddhi was impossible. But in Alipore jail, once I found that my body had occupied a position which it was physically impossible to have. Then again, I was practising to raise my hands and keep them suspended without any muscular control. Once in that raised condition of hands I fell off to sleep. The warder saw this condition and reported that I had died. Authorities came and found me quite alive. I told them he was a fool.

There is a French author Jules Romain. He is a medical man and

a mystic. He can see with other parts of the body with eyes closed. He says, "Eyes are only a specialised organ." Other parts can as well be trained to see. But scientists refused to admit his demonstration.

Disciple: Ramana Maharshi does not believe in the descent of the Supermind.

Sri Aurobindo: It — the descent — is the experience of many sadhaks even outside our Yoga. An old sannyasi of the Ramakrishna Mission saw a flood of light descending and when he asked about it he was told it was all the work of the Devil and the whole experience stopped afterwards.

In Maharshi s case he has received the Power in the heart and has worked with it, so he does not feel the descent.

Disciple: I believe that Grace is without condition.

Sri Aurobindo: That may be true from the side of the Divine but the man must try to fulfil the condition under which alone Grace can act.

(*At this pointy a disciple quoted a sentence from Sri Aurobindo's* The Mother: "*The supreme Grace will act only in the conditions of the Light and the Truth; it will not act in conditions laid upon it by the Falsehood and the Ignorance*.")

Disciple: Grace is grace; but one need not sit with folded hands. What is achieved is by the Divine Grace.

Sri Aurobindo: Grace is of course unconditional, but it is for men to fulfil the conditions. It is as if man was continually spilling from a cup in which something was being poured.

♏

11 DECEMBER 1938

The talk turned to some people who had been asked to leave the Ashram for certain misdeeds. Now they were spreading calumnies against Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

Disciple: Is there no justice for the misdeeds of people like S, V and N? Surely they will have to bear the consequences of their actions? And yet how is it these people succeed in life?

Sri Aurobindo: Justice in this life? Maybe not. Most probably not. But justice is not what most people believe it to be. It is said that virtuous people will have happiness, prosperity, etc., in another life while in this life they have the opposite effects. In that case, the people you speak of must have been virtuous in their previous life. There is justice in the sense that the virtuous and pious people advance towards Sattwic nature while the contrary ones go down the scale of humanity and become more and more Asuric. That is what I have said in the *Arya*.

At this moment Mother came in and asked what was the subject of talk.

Sri Aurobindo: X was asking about justice — whether it exists.

Mother (*after apause*)**:** Of course, there is justice. These people suffer, they are tormented and not happy within.

Disciple: But that unhappiness does not seem to change them; they go from worse to worse!

Mother: Yes, but in some cases as the divine Pressure goes on acting, at some time, especially during an impending catastrophe, suddenly a change takes place in these people. We have seen a number of people like that. For example, among those who were trying to persecute Sri Aurobindo when he first came here...

Sri Aurobindo: N may be a scoundrel, but he has capacity and cleverness and so he will surely succeed in life. It is that capacity

and cleverness that succeed in life, not virtues, etc.

Disciple: To cheat people and get money — is it cleverness?

Sri Aurobindo: Of course it is cleverness; or, you may say, a misuse of cleverness. I don't say that this cleverness will not have its consequences, but at the same time, it is these qualities that succeed in life.

Disciple (*to the Mother*)**:** You have said in your *Prayers* that justice exists. One cannot avoid the law of Karma except by Divine Grace.

Disciple: Why does not one believe in Grace?

Mother: It is because the human mind arranges and combines things and does not leave any room for the Grace. For instance, when one is cured of a disease or passes an examination, he thinks it is due to medicine or some chance. He does not see that in between, or behind, there may be Grace acting on him. (*Turning to Sri Aurobindo*) Is it not so?

Sri Aurobindo: They would call it luck. (*Laughter*)

Mother: If you don't recognize the Grace how can it work? It is as if you had shut your doors against it. Of course, it can work below, underneath, so to say.

Disciple: Doesn't it act unconditionally?

Mother: It does, especially in those people who have been predestined for something; but if one recognizes and expresses gratitude, it acts more forcefully and quickly.

Disciple: Isn't it because we are ignorant?

Mother: No, I know many ignorant people having the Grace expressing a deep gratitude rising from the heart.

Disciple: We would like the Grace to act like a mother feeding a hungry baby, giving things when it needs, etc.

Sri Aurobindo: And who is the baby? (*Loud laughter*)

Mother: But the Grace does not work according to human demands or conceptions. How can it? It has its own law and way. Very often what seems to be a great blow or calamity at the present moment may appear to be a great blessing after ten years and people say that their real life began after that.

Sri Aurobindo: Grace is unconditional but at the same time, how will it work if a man is throwing away the Grace, or does not recognize it? It is like a man continually spilling from the cup in which something is being poured.

Mother: I am interested to see the reactions in the two fellows. It may have different results in both. I can't say now how it will be different.

Disciple: Will it be a difference of degree?

Mother: No, difference of quality also. One is more stupid and blind than the other who knows consciously what he is aiming at. So the former has less power to harm.

Disciple: Perhaps one may change for the better in this life?

Mother: That is romance.

Disciple: Especially, S may return to the Ashram again.

Mother (*looking very amused*)**:** Do you think so? When a man turns his back he has no chance, no possibility. One who is given a chance may have a possibility.

(*With these words the Mother left for the collective meditation downstairs*.)

Disciple: The law of Karma according to Jainism is inexorable. Even the Tirthankars can't escape it, and have to pay in exact mathematical proportion.

Sri Aurobindo: It is a great thing, but too wonderful and mathematical to be true; e.g., a son who lived for a short time cost his father a great deal of money for his ill-health. It was said that the father had been a debtor to the son in a previous life and the son —

by means of his illness — realised the exact amount of money that he had lent his father and then died. (*Laughter*)

Disciple: There is what is called Nikachit Karma or Utkata Karma which cannot be avoided. It is like a knot that cannot be untied — like a silk thread tied into a knot and burnt.

Sri Aurobindo: So it may be this Utkata Karma that brought about the accident [*to Sri Aurobindo's leg*]!

Disciple: What is incomprehensible is the unmerited suffering of the physical consciousness in your case.

Sri Aurobindo: How do you know it is unmerited ? Perhaps it was to give me knowledge of what intense pain is. I had ordinary pains before which I could turn into Ananda. But this was intense. I never had the experience and when it came suddenly and abruptly, I could not change it into Ananda. When it became of a steady nature I could. Besides, we shall see afterwards the full significance. Of course, I accept it as a part of the battle.

Disciple: When will you be cured?

Sri Aurobindo: Don't ask me that question. It is just what I can't know, for, immediately I say something, the hostile forces would at once rush to prevent it. That is why I don't want to prophesy. Not that things are not known, or possibilities not seen. For instance, there are things about which I have definitely said. But where it is a question of possibilities, I don't tie myself to that chain of possibilities. For if I do that I commit myself in advance to certain lines of movement and the result of it may not be what I want, and I won't be able to bring down that for which I am striving — it may not be the highest but only something partial.

But plenty of people can prophesy. That capacity is common among Yogis. When I was arrested, my maternal grand-aunt asked Swami Bhaskaranand, "What will happen to our Aurobindo?" He replied, "The Divine Mother has taken him in her arms; nothing will happen to him. But he is not *your* Aurobindo. He is the world's

Aurobindo and the world will be filled with his perfume." Another time I was taken by Jatin Banerji to a Swami Narayan Jyotishi who foretold about my three trials, white enemies and also my release. When my horoscope was shown he said that there was some mistake about time and when the time was corrected he replied, "Oh, the lead is turned into gold now."

(*Turning to X*) Have you had any prophecy in dreams? Many people get dreams or visions of coming events.

Disciple: I know the instance of A's daughter-in-law who saw him carried to the cemetery and exactly two hours later he died of heart failure.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, that is a good instance.

Disciple: Even without knowing the person concerned can one prophesy like that, i.e., like Bhaskaranand?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, it is an intuitive power. I once tried to see a man who was to be elected and saw a figure seated in the office but quite different and unknown, not the one elected. After some time a quarrel took place between my brother-in-law Saurin Bose and a government official and he was called. But by mistake "Bose" became "Ghose", and I had to go and see the man. I found the same man of my vision sitting as the Governor and I was much surprised.

On another occasion V. Ramaswamy Aiyangar, a friend of Z, was coming to see me and I wanted to have a vision of the man. I saw him as having a clean-shaven head, a bull-dog face; but when he came, I found his appearance quite different, regular South Indian Brahmin features. But curiously enough, exactly after one year I saw that he had changed to what I had seen of him in vision. These things are thrown out from the subtle world to the surface consciousness.

There is another instance. I was a great tea addict and could not do any work without a cup of tea. The management of tea was in charge of Saurin. He used to bring the tea at any time he woke up

from sleep. One day, though, I had much work to do. I was thinking, "When will he bring tea? Why does he not come?"

I had made a rule never to ask anything from anybody. Suddenly a parucular time appeared on the wall in front of me. And — I looked at the watch — it was at that very moment that the tea was brought!

Disciple: Is consciousness of the Divine possible in the physical cells even?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, the cells can have peace, joy, etc., and when they are quite conscious, they can throw out the opposing forces. When peace descends in the physical it is a great force for cure.

Disciple: Can one have peace without knowing it?

Sri Aurobindo: That is natural peace which is more than quietude. But there is a positive peace which one knows and feels. Truth also can descend into the physical, and also Power, but very few can bear Power. Light also descends. I remember a disciple telling his Guru about the descent of Light in himself. The Guru said, "The devil has caught hold of you." And from that time the disciple lost everything.

There is an infinite sea of peace, Ananda, above the head. If one is in contact with it one can get these things always.

Disciple: Do any thoughts or suggestions come to you?

Sri Aurobindo: What do you mean? Thoughts and suggestions come to me from every side and I don't refuse them. I accept them and see what they are. But what you call 'thinking', that I never do. Thinking in that sense ceased long ago — since I had that experience with Lele. Thoughts, as I said, come to me from all sides and from above and the transmitting mind remains quiet, or it enlarges to receive them. True thoughts come in this way. You can't think out such thoughts, what Mother calls "mental constructions".

Disciple: Was *Arya* written in that way?

Sri Aurobindo: No, it was directly transmitted into the pen. It is a great relief to get out of that responsibility.

Disciple: Oh yes, Sir!

Sri Aurobindo: I don't mean responsibility in general but that of thinking about everything. Some thoughts are given or reflected from above. It is not that I don't ask for knowledge. When I want knowledge I call for it. The higher faculty sees thoughts as if written on a wall.

♏

12 DECEMBER 1938

The Mother was present and Dr. Manilal put the following question to her.

Disciple: Is it a sin to kill scorpions, bugs and mosquitoes?

Mother (*smiling*)**:** Ask Sri Aurobindo. When I first came here I used to drive mosquitoes away by yogic force. Sri Aurobindo did not approve of it.

Sri Aurobindo: Because one is making friendship with them in that way.

But what is the sin there? If you don't kill them they will go and bite some other people and won't that be a sin committed by you?

Disciple: But they have life, Sir!

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, they have.

Disciple: And if one kills them?

Sri Aurobindo: Well, what happens?

Disciple: He will be liable to sin, of course. I don't mean we don't kill at all; for instance, when we are breathing in micro-organisms.

Mother: The doctors don't kill?

Disciple: Yes, Mother. But I mean that killing is not intentional.

Disciple: It is said that the Jains hire people to feed bugs!

Disciple: No. That is only a story.

Sri Aurobindo: At any rate, I know of a story in history. When Mahmud of Ghazni invaded India he defeated a Jain king through the help of that king's brother. The dethroned king was left in charge of his brother, who was now the king. He did not know what to do with his prisoner; so, he dug a pit below his throne and threw him in it and closed it up. As a result he died; so the brother did not kill him! (*Laughter*)

Mother: Then, in order to be a true Jain, one must be a yogi and then with yogic power he can deal with these animals and insects.

Disciple: Is one justified in killing snakes and scorpions?

Sri Aurobindo: Why not? One must kill in self-defence. I don't mean that you must hunt out the snakes and kill them. But when you see that they are endangering your life or others' lives, then you have every right to kill them.

Mother: The plants also have life. So, you mean to say that the mosquito is more precious than the rose? You don't know perhaps how the plants feel.

Disciple: There are people who say that killing a dog or a cat is not so sinful as killing a man.

Sri Aurobindo: Life is life — whether in a cat, or dog or man. There is no difference there between a cat or a man. The idea of difference is a human conception for man's own advantage perhaps.

The Mother now departed. Then the topic of homeopathy came up. It was said that it has cures even for religious depression, and anger

also.

Sri Aurobindo: Anger, the scientists say, is due to the secretions of glands — even love. But (*half-smiling*) can egoism be cured like that?

Disciple: If it can be cured, I would be the first to apply for it.

Disciple: The fact that you are conscious about the ego makes half the cure. (*To Sri Aurobindo*) Is it not so?

Sri Aurobindo: Not necessarily. But it is the first step.

Disciple: And what is the second?

Sri Aurobindo: To detach oneself from all these things. To think as if all these things belong to the outer being, or someone else. As one goes on doing this the Purusha gradually withdraws its sanction from the Prakriti and Prakriti loosens its hold over nature till a spiritual control takes place. But if one associates oneself with the Prakriti then the Purusha becomes a slave to it. Rejection, of course, is the stronger way. One has to reject these things before they enter, as I did the thoughts. It is more powerful and the result also is quick.

There is also a mental control; but there too it is the nature of Mind trying to control the nature of the Vital. It has only a temporary and partial control. The thing is rather suppressed within and can come out at any opportunity.

I heard of a Yogi in Benares bathing in one of the ghats. In the neighbouring ghat a beautiful Kashmiri woman came to bathe. As soon as he saw her he fell upon her and tried to outrage her. That is evidently a case of mental control.

But by Yoga sometimes things which have not been there before come up. I have heard about it from many persons. In my case, I saw anger coming up and possessing me. It was absolutely uncontrollable when it came. I was very much surprised to see it in my nature. Anger has always been foreign to me.

At another rime, when I was an undertrial prisoner at Alipore Jail, a terrible catastrophe was avoided. Prisoners had to wait outside for sometime before entering the cells. While we were waiting the Scottish warder came and gave me a push. The young men around me became very excited, and I did nothing but gave him such a look that he immediately fled and called the Jailer. It was a communicative anger and all the young men rallied round to attack him. When the Jailer, who was rather a religious man, arrived, the warder said I had given him "a subordinate look". The Jailer asked me and I told him that I have never been used to such treatment. He pacified the whole group and said while going, "We have all to bear our cross."

But by that anger, such as I had, I don t mean the *Rudrabhāva,* — that I have experienced a few times.

Disciple: Is Rudrabhava something like Ramakrishna's story about the snake, where anger is to be shown without really feeling it?

Sri Aurobindo: Not at all. It is something genuine — a violent severity against something very wrong, e.g., the Rudrabhava of Shiva. Anger one knows by its feeling and sensation. It rises from below, while Rudrabhava rises from the heart. I will give you an instance. Once X became very violent against the Mother and was shouting and shaking his fists at her. When I heard the shouting, a violent severity came down that was absolutely uncontrollable.

I went out and said: "Who is shouting at the Mother? Who is shouting here?" As soon as he heard it he became very quiet.

Disciple: I heard X had a very violent temper.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. He was otherwise an earnest sadhak, became conscious of many things and made progress. But these fits used to come to him now and then. Some Asuric forces used to catch hold of him and he could not control himself. It is these forces that have caused his failure in the Yoga, for I hear he does not have

these attacks now outside. When under their grip he could not see that he was in the wrong. He blamed me and the Mother, though we had been very lenient and considerate to him. After sometime he was able to recognise his fault, admit it and promise that he would not do it again. But again he would be swept away by the forces. Sometimes his vanity and self-respect would come in the way of his admitting the fault immediately. That is the mistake. One must not justify ones wrong-doing. If one does that, it comes again and makes it more difficult to get rid of it.

Disciple: Y, after doing so much Tapasya, is thinking of leaving the Ashram, and that too after twelve years of stay!

Sri Aurobindo: What Tapasya? If complete control over things was given to him he would have stayed perhaps.

Disciple: He says he is helping the Mother in the work.

Sri Aurobindo: Helping only? I thought he was conducting the Ashram! (*Laughter*)

Disciple: But these kinds of people, will they ever realise the Divine?

Sri Aurobindo: Everyone will arrive at the Divine. A once asked the Mother if he will realise God. Mother replied that he will, unless he did something idiotic and cut short his life, and that is what he almost did!

♏

13 DECEMBER 1938

Mother came at 5-55 and meditated till after 7-05. It is difficult to say whether the feast of silent meditation was more precious than the conversation which happened to take place after Mother left for the evening meditation.

Sri Aurobindo (*with a smile to X*)**:** Meditating?

Disciple: I am trying hard Sir, for the last three-fourths of an hour but have not succeded. Many unwanted thoughts come.

Sri Aurobindo: What are they?

Disciple: Some nonsense.

Sri Aurobindo: Some extraordinary non-sense like perpetual attendance on the Maharaja or of the likely successor to Mussolini?

Disciple: No, Sir. The thought of the Maharaja comes very rarely. But why doesn't one succeed in meditating even after trying so much? The last time I had a fine meditation was when Dr. R came from Madras. But I see my friend N at once bends his head down and I believe he is merged in Sachchidananda.

Disciple: Yes, in despair; perhaps I go to sleep.

Sri Aurobindo: But there is a look of deep concentration on your face. (*Laughter*)

Disciple: Can one go to sleep in despair?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, as an escape out of the despair. Apart from that, it happens to everybody, except for yogis who have made it their business to meditate. And even they find there are periods of blankness when nothing seems to be done or going on.

Disciple: As he is a poet he may be living in higher regions.

Sri Aurobindo: You must not forget Shakespeare's saying that "All poetry is telling lies." (*Laughter*)

Disciple: He is not a poet of that sort.

Disciple: Perhaps you had a dose of meditation last week which you are now assimilating; you are suffering from spiritual dyspepsia.

Disciple: But some people go into unconsciousness as soon as they begin meditation. For example R and C. Even P, when he used to join, became unconscious of the body.

Sri Aurobindo: Some yogis require a support to prevent their bodies from falling while they are in meditation. Those who practise Asanas can remain erect.

There are some who go to sleep standing like a horse. My grandfather, Rajnarayan Bose, was like that. One day we were walking together at night. Suddenly we missed him. When we came back we saw him sleeping standing.

Disciple: It is a question of habit and convenience, I think.

Disciple: Was Rajnarayan practising meditation?

Sri Aurobindo: Not much. It was a Brahmo-meditation. (*Laughter*)

Disciple: Sometimes meditation used to come to me spontaneously at my place and I used to get into a condition when I would be compelled to sit down to meditate.

Sri Aurobindo: It was probably the inner being insisting on it. It is always better to allow it to work.

Disciple: It used to happen even when I would be leaving for my work. For days I used to feel that my head was resting on the Mother's feet. What is that?

Sri Aurobindo: It was the experience of psychic Bhakti.

Disciple: But then it went away. How to retain that experience?

Sri Aurobindo: The condition is "to want that and nothing else". If you have that intense passion for union with the Divine then it can remain. It is too difficult, is it? So, it is better to allow the Higher Power to work.

Disciple: We tried hard to make him [*Dr. M*] stay here for three months but he is all the time thinking of his family.

Disciple: I felt a pull upward in the head while meditating.

Sri Aurobindo: It is the mind trying to ascend to the Higher Consciousness.

Disciple: Sometimes I feel myself widening.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, sometimes one feels the head opening or expanding. That is the sign of the mental being opening to the Power.

Disciple: Sometimes I see sky, ocean, or mountains and forests.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. One sees many things by the inner sight. These are symbols of life or energy. Sky is the symbol of the mind. Mountain is the symbol of the being with its different planes and parts with the Divine as the summit. Forests are symbols of the vital.

Disciple: These visions are seen by many, quite common.

Sri Aurobindo: Oh yes, as the mind expands so also the heart expands and also the vital. If one sees those things outside oneself then that has only symbolic significance but if one feels the widening or coming of Light in himself then that increases the opening and the receptivity of the being.

Disciple: What do you mean by the Divine or the Supreme?

Sri Aurobindo: I mean by it a Consciousness of which the Gita speaks as Param Bhavam, Purushottama, Parabrahman, Paramatman. That is to say, the origin and the support and cause of everything. It is Omnipotent and Omnipresent. You can't define it. You limit it if you define it. It can be described as Sachchidananda. It is everything, it is everywhere, it is in everything. It is impersonal, "Neti, Neti"; it is also "Iti, Iti". You can have the experience of Sachchidananda on any plane. These things cannot be known by the mind or by discussion. The Golden Lid has to be broken.

Disciple: What will happen if one realises the divine consciousness?

Sri Aurobindo: First thing, you will become calm and quiet. Secondly, there will be the feeling of strength, I mean the presence of a Force. Thirdly, the sense of the Infinite will be felt, you will feel

yourself as the Infinite. Fourthly, something will be always there behind which will be able to govern the nature. Also the sense of Eternity and of yourself as immortal. Even though the body dies you know you are immortal. Also there are many things more. For example, freedom from everything, even from the world. You realise the Transcendental and the Universal consciousness.

Realisation of the fundamental Being may be the beginning, i.e., realisation of the essential Being, Consciousness and Delight. Then, everything is divine, you are divine, you live in the Divine; it is one of the most Anandamaya experiences. It is a concrete and real thing and not an idea. You cannot explain these things. You can't explain even a stone in spite of your science. Everything is not material but mystical at bottom.

Disciple: Is it that this experience formulates itself differently in different yogis to suit their personalities? or the difference is due to nature or personality itself?

Sri Aurobindo: There, personality is no longer separate. It is the One putting itself forward with a special quality, stress or emphasis. Nimbarka's Bhedabheda means that.

Disciple: You have also spoken of the veil in the heart.

Sri Aurobindo: It is also true. It sometimes requires removing the veil and breaking the wall in the heart. Sometimes after the experience of opening it seems to close again. Most of the obstruction comes from the vital. So, the being is prepared behind the veil and when everything is ready it is projected in the outer nature. But the demand in this Yoga is much more than in any other and so it takes a long time. All yoga requires patience above everything else.

Disciple: We must have been working for it for many lives.

Sri Aurobindo: According to some yogas you have no right to the result for twelve years. After twelve years you have to see if anything has happened or not.

Disciple: When the preparation is being done behind, can we say that some of the sadhaks have achieved very great advance like the Vedic Rishis?

Sri Aurobindo: How do you mean? Their outer nature is not ready and so they can't be said to have realised the Truth. Nature is full of difficulties and obstacles and so the Higher Power works behind. If it worked in the outer nature, it would meet too many obstacles.

Disciple: So it is the Bhedabheda philosophy?

Sri Aurobindo: It is not merely philosophy — the fact is there corresponding to the philosophy. The Gita speaks of it as *avibhakaṁ ca bhūteṣu vibhaktamiva ca sthitaṁ* — undivided in the midst of divided things, appearing as if divided. This is not an illusion. I see a tree: the tree appears to me as separate from me. But it is the One, because one with Him. It is myself. It is something else than a tree. It is impossible to think of it as something else than the Brahman. When I cast my eyes round the room everything — objects and persons — appears as the Brahman. I call you so and so but you are not that.

Ordinarily, one tags everything on to the 'ego'. But in that higher state you understand the divine working better than when you are a separate 'ego'. It is when you can become 'nobody' and have experience of the Divine that you can be free. That is Mukti. When I realized the One, my self disappeared. It is difficult to think of myself as so and so, son of so and so. It is a relief and freedom to be 'That' and to remain in 'It'.

Disciple: Can it be called Shankara's Vedantic realization?

Sri Aurobindo: About Shankara's Vedanta, the difficulty is that there are different explanations by various people. The world is an Illusion — and the Illusion is indescribable. This is the common basis of all Shankarite Adwaita. According to him, soul also is

Maya, as it has no real existence.[18] But I found that the experience behind this idea is quite different. I had that experience at Baroda, and if I had stopped there I would have become an orthodox Vedantin.

♏

14 DECEMBER 1938

Time: about 5-30 p.m. Silent atmosphere. X meditating, Y sitting by his side. Sri Aurobindo cast a glance at X. After a few minutes Y tried to kill a mosquito with a clapping of hands. Sri Aurobindo looked at Y. X opened his eyes. Y felt much embarrassed.

Disciple: Were you ever a freemason, Sir?

Sri Aurobindo: My eldest brother was; from him I gathered that it was nothing. But the Order of Freemasons had something when it was started. Have you heard of Cagliostro? He was a mystic and a freemason with a great prophetic power. He prophesied about the French Revolution, the razing of the Bastille and guillotining of the King and Queen. He used to prophesy about racehorses which got him into trouble and he was imprisoned and died in prison. He never charged any money from anyone and yet he was affluent. It was said he knew alchemy and could make gold.

(*There was a few minutes of silence*)

Have you heard about Nostradamus? No? He was a Jew. At that time Jews had great knowledge. He wrote a book of prophecy in some obscure language and prophesied about the execution of Charles I, the end of the British Empire and the lasting of the Empire for about 330 years.

[18] Shankara's followers disagree. According to Sri Aurobindo, God is one and many at the same time — they may say, "a logical contradiction". So is Maya — true and false at the same time. That also is a logical contradiction.

Disciple: Then there is still a long time before it goes?

Sri Aurobindo: No, it was to be counted from the beginning of her colonies. That means from James I. In that case it should end now.

Disciple: From Chamberlain's speech today it seems Britain is not obliged to side with France in case of war — it looks like it.

Sri Aurobindo: The English always keep their policy open so that they may change and correct as they like.

Disciple: But they cannot join Italy or Germany?

Sri Aurobindo: Why not? They can share with them France's African Colonies.

At this time Mother came. We looked towards her and changed our position from near Sri Aurobindo's head. She said, "Don't move, don't move."

Disciple: We have decided to meditate when you come.

(*Mother made big eyes and we all laughed*.)

Mother: But if I want to hear the talk?

Disciple: Then we will talk.

Sri Aurobindo (*addressing the Mother*)**:** I am giving him a few prophecies of Cagliostro and Nostradamus whom he has never read, he says.

Disciple: You know Bhikshu X was quite illogical; he called me back from here?

Sri Aurobindo: All preachers are illogical. Were you a fervent Buddhist? Is there much Buddhism in your parts of Bengal?

Disciple: About one or two million people are Buddhists and there is nothing of Buddhism in what they follow.

Mother: Nothing or something of Buddhism?

Disciple: Something.

Mother: In China and Japan also no real Buddhism is left. Only ceremonies remain. In Ceylon they say there is still some authentic Buddhism.

Disciple: In Burma also the same is the case. But the Burmese people do show a great respect for their Bhikshus.

Disciple: Yes, respect to the dress and not to the person.

Sri Aurobindo: Lele used to have the same idea. Once I met a sannyasi with him. Lele asked me: "You don't bow down to him?" I replied: "I don't believe in the man." Lele said: "But you must respect the yellow robe!"[19] (*Laughter*)

As Mother had gone into meditation we all tried to meditate with her. At about 7 p.m. she went for the group meditation and we rallied again round Sri Aurobindo.

Sri Aurobindo (*addressing Y*)**:** You seemed to have Ananda in your meditation. Your face is beaming with it.

Disciple: Yes, Sir. He is nowadays beaming with Ananda.

Disciple (*shyly*)**:** I fell into deep sleep I think. But I also had some visions which seemed to be quite distinctly outside me.

Sri Aurobindo: Then why do you call it sleep? It may be the psychic being, or the inner being watching what is happening. Sometimes one goes into a deeper state and remembers nothing in his outer consciousness, though many things may be going on within. What is called dreamless sleep is really a sleep in which dreams are passing on, only one does not know. Sometimes one discusses problems in such a condition, gets the ecstasy of union, etc. One may also go into other worlds with one part of his being and meet other forms, etc. This is of course the first condition and a

[19] The sannyasi was one of the three whom Vivekananda had driven out of the Math. They had then become 'avatars' in one day!

kind of a beginning of Samadhi. From what you describe it may be the inner beings experience and not the psychic's. Even then, there is no doubt that your face is beaming with Ananda, seeing which I thought you went within.

Disciple: Can one get the diagnoses of diseases in such states?

Sri Aurobindo: Oh yes. Many people are said to have their problems solved in this way. I remember a peculiar experience of mine. As I was meditating I saw some writings crossing over my head, and then a blank. Then again these writings with a gap in the middle which meant that things were going on though I was not conscious of it.

(*Turning to X*): Now what about your meditation?

Disciple: Not successful, Sir.

Sri Aurobindo: How? I saw you going in and powerfully wrestling your way towards the Brahman. (*Laughter*)

Disciple: Plenty of thoughts invaded me. I tried to reject them and make myself empty.

Sri Aurobindo: The result was emptiness? (*Laughter*)

Disciple: But that is meditation, surely?

Disciple: No, no, it is not. I could not go into nothingness. I did not feel the Presence; was it meditation, Sir?

Sri Aurobindo: That is the beginning, the first condition. The mind must first be quiet for the other things to come down. But one must not dictate to meditation what it should be or should not be. One must accept whatever it brings.

Disciple: But was I right?

Sri Aurobindo: Right about what?

Disciple: That I was able to reject thoughts?

Sri Aurobindo (*laughing*)**:** How do I know? You are to say that. I was only making comments on your statement.

Disciple: You don't know? We consider you omniscient.

Sri Aurobindo: You don't expect me to know how many fish the fishermen here have caught, how much they have made out of it? People from Bombay used to ask me if the price of cotton would go up, about racehorses and about their lost children. What is the use of knowing all that? You know Ramakrishna's comment on a sannyasi crossing a river by occult power! He said it was a Siddhi worth half an anna!

Of course if necessary one can know these things, but I am not occupied with this sort of thing. I have left it to the Mother. She hears what is being said at a distance, meets sadhaks in subtle planes, talks to them, etc. She saw exactly what was going to happen in the recent European trouble. We know what we have to know for our work.

Disciple: What puzzles me is that you never told me when I asked about my diagnosis of a patient.

Sri Aurobindo: Why do you expect us to do your work?

Disciple: Oh, that is different. But you said you have no latent medico in you and hence you can't say. I thought you could say by your intuition.

Sri Aurobindo (*addressing X*)**:** I was telling you we know what we have got to know. But it is not always good to know. For instance, if I know a thing is going to happen I am bound to it, and even if it is not what I wanted, I have to accept it, and this prevents my having a greater or another possibility. So I want to keep myself free and deal with various possibilities. Below the Supermind everything is a question of possibilities; so if I keep myself free, I can accept or reject as I like. Destiny is not a thing fixed. It is just a complex of forces which can be changed.

Disciple: Without knowledge of the thing how shall one work? After knowing what is to happen cannot one reject it?

Sri Aurobindo: Knowledge comes by intuition. One can reject but the result is not sure though failure may show the way for later success.

Disciple (*X*)**:** You have said in an August 15th conversation that you have conquered death by natural process but you do not have complete control over accidents.

Sri Aurobindo: What exactly did I say?

Disciple (*Y*)**:** If I remember rightly, you wrote to me that diseases can't end your life but still you have little control over accidents.

Sri Aurobindo: Oh! Diseases usually run a long course so one has time to act on them, but if there is a disease suddenly of a severe nature that can end ones life immediately, then conquest is not possible. And about accidents, the body has its own consciousness and is always alert. But if the mind is occupied with other things, then an accident can take one unawares. As regards violence, e.g. of a riot, I would have to concentrate for four or five days to protect myself.

The hostile forces have tried many times to prevent the Darshan but I have succeeded in warding off all those attacks. This time I was more occupied with guarding the Mother and I forgot about myself. I did not think that they would attack me. That was my mistake. As regards the Ashram, I have been extremely successful but while I have tried to work in the world, results have been varied. In Spain, I was splendidly successful. General Miaja was an admirable instrument. Working of the Force depends on the instrument. Basque was a failure. Negrin was a good instrument but people around him, though good warriors, were too ill-organised and ill-equipped. Egypt was not successful. Ireland and Turkey were a tremendous success. In Ireland I have done exactly what I wanted to do in Bengal. Turks are a silent race.

Disciple: What do you think of the China-Japan war?

Sri Aurobindo: I don't think much of either party. They are like six and half-a-dozen. Both too much materialistic. But if I had to choose, I would side with Japan. Japan at one time had an ideal. Their powers of self-sacrifice, patriotism, self-abnegation and silence are remarkable. They would never lose temper in front of anybody. If their honour is injured they may stab, but they must not lose self-control. They worked so silently and secretly that no one knew anything about how they had prepared themselves before the Russo-Japanese war actually broke out. All on a sudden it broke out. They are Kshatriyas and their aesthetic sense is of course well known. But the European influence has spoiled all that. They are now very materialistic. How brutal they have become now; it is thoroughly un-Japanese.

Look at the Japanese soldier slapping the European officers — though they do deserve it; and the Japanese commander challenging Chiang-Kai-Shek to come out in the open field, and Japanese men attacking their political leaders — all this is inconceivable. This sort of swaggering is not at all Japanese. In old times, the Japanese, even while fighting, had perfect sympathy with those with whom they fought.

Disciple: But without brutalities (killing innocent inhabitants) it would be difficult to win the war.

Sri Aurobindo: God knows. They are such fine warriors and a patriotic and self-sacrificing nation that one would like to believe the contrary. But they are doing these things because of two reasons probably: financial shortage — which is not very convincing because of their immense power of sacrifice; and the vast population of China.

Disciple: And the foreign help to China, e.g. the Soviet?

Sri Aurobindo: That is a possibility but the Soviet Union's internal condition is such that it can't think of giving much help to others.

Disciple: What about India's independence? Is it developing along your lines?

Sri Aurobindo: Surely not! India is now going towards European Socialism which is dangerous for her; while we were trying to evolve the true genius of the race along Indian lines and all working for independence.

Take the Bengal [*Swadeshi*] movement. The whole race was awakened within a short time. People who were such cowards and trembled before the sight of a revolver were in a short period so much changed that police officials used to say "That insolent Barisal look". It was the soul of the race that woke up throwing up very fine personalities. The leaders of the movement were either yogis or disciples of yogis, e.g., Monoranjan Guha Thakurata was a disciple of Bejoy Goswami.

Disciple: Was he a nationalist?

Sri Aurobindo: Good Lord! He was my fellow-worker. He also took part in our secret society. Then there was Brahmo Bandhava Upadhyaya and others. Ramakrishna and Vivekananda's influence worked from behind. The movement with the secret society became so formidable that in any other country with a political past it would have led to something like the French Revolution. The sympathy of the whole race was on our side. Even shopkeepers were reading *Yugantar.* I will tell you an instance: when a young man was running away after killing a police officer in Shambazar, he forgot to throw away his revolver. It remained in his hand. One shopkeeper cried out: "Hide your revolver, hide your revolver."

And have you heard of Jatin Mukherjee's exploits?

Disciple: Yes, Sir.

Sri Aurobindo: A wonderful man. He was a man who would belong to the front rank of humanity. Such beauty and strength together I have not seen, and his stature was like that of a warrior.

♏

15 DECEMBER 1938

Dr. Savour, a homeopath, had come. The Mother also came. N asked S how he knew his intuition in diagnosis and prescription was correct. S said as it was not obtained through logical reasoning, it had to be correct.

N (*to Sri Aurobindo*)**:** You told me R [*the Ashram homeopath*] uses mental intuition. So there must be various levels of intuition.

Sri Aurobindo: By mental intuition I mean the intuition which comes from Above but gets mixed with the mind. I don't say that mental intuition is not correct but it is always limited because of the mixture. There is also the vital intuition which very often becomes mixed up with one's desires.

Disciple: How to get true intuition By calmness of mind?

Sri Aurobindo: Calmness is not enough. Mind must be silent.

Disciple: It will then take a long time.

Sri Aurobindo: Can't say. Can take a short time, or a long time.

Disciple: But it won't be possible to keep the silence until one has realized the Spirit.

Sri Aurobindo: One can train one's mind to be silent.

Dr. S took leave. Then, as Mother went into meditation, we tried to do the same. By 7 p.m., after Mother had gone downstairs, we rallied round Sri Aurobindo who looked once or twice at M.

Disciple: M is beaming today.

Disciple: Could not meditate well, Sir, because I have lumbago but I felt some vibration at the back and felt happy.

Disciple: That must be Kundalini then.

Disciple: I don't believe it. Is this vibration the Higher Force, Sir?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. It was trying to cure your lumbago, perhaps, and the first sign was a little aggravation. (*Laughter*)

You don't believe in Kundalini?

Disciple: No, Sir.

Sri Aurobindo: But you were telling about your "ascent and descent" experience.

Disciple: Is that Kundalini? I did not know it. (*Laughter*) But Kundalini is not the line of our Yoga and you have not mentioned about it anywhere.

Disciple: Oh yes, he has in the *Lights on Yoga.*

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. Kundalini is, of course, the Tantrik idea: the Shakti lying coiled in Muladhara awakes, rises up and carries the consciousness upward opening all the chakras up to Brahmarandhra and then meets the Brahman, and then the descent begins. The Tantrik process is more technical.

It is curious to see the action of the Force in some cases. Some feel as if a drilling were being done in the brain. Some people can't hold the Force in. They sway from side to side, make peculiar sounds. I remember a man practising Pranayama rigorously and making horrible sounds. I did not hear of his getting any good results. Sometimes the Force raises up what lies below — in the lower nature — in order to be able to deal with it.

18 DECEMBER 1938

There was an article on Sri Aurobindo in *Asia,* an American paper, by Swami Nikhilananda of the Ramakrishna Mission.

Disciple: It is surprising that Swami Nikhilananda should write about you.

Sri Aurobindo: It is Nishtha who arranged for its publication before coming here. He is a friend of hers.

(*After a pause*) It is peculiar how they give an American turn to everything.

Disciple: How is it that Americans seem to be more open?

Sri Aurobindo: Because they are a new nation and have no past tradition to bind them. France and Czechoslovakia also are open. Many are writing from there that they want to do Yoga.

Disciple: Was Nishtha in communication with you for some time?

Sri Aurobindo: Oh yes. For three or four years she has been in touch with us. She has very clear ideas about Yoga and was practising it there.

Disciple (*who had just arrived*)**:** She must be very disappointed because there was no Darshan this time.

Sri Aurobindo: No. She has taken it in the right yogic attitude — unlike many others.

Disciple: How was it that there are no Maharashtrian sadhaks here in spite of your close association with Tilak and staying so long in Baroda?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, it is strange. Perhaps because they are more vital in their nature. There are people from Bengal, Gujarat and Madras, and now also from C.P., Punjab, Behar.

(T*he talk then passed on to Supermind*.)

Disciple: I hope we shall live to see the glorious day of the Supermind. When will it descend, Sir?

Sri Aurobindo (*After a pause*)**:** How can it descend? The nearer it comes the greater becomes the resistance to it!

Disciple: On the contrary, the law of gravitation should pull it down.

Sri Aurobindo: That theory does not apply to it for it has levitational tendency and if it comes down in spite of that it does so against tremendous resistance.

Disciple: Have you realized the Supermind?

Sri Aurobindo: You know I was talking about the tail of the Supermind to Y. I know what it is, I had flashes and glimpses of it. I have been trying to Supramentalise the Overmind. Not that the Supermind is not acting. It is doing so through Overmind and Intuition and the intermediate powers have come down. Supermind is above the Overmind (*he showed it by placing one palm above the other*) so that one may mistake one for the other. I remember the day when people here claimed to have got it. I myself had made mistakes about it in the beginning, and I did not know about the many planes. It was Vivekananda — who used to come to me in Alipore Jail — who showed to me the Intuitive plane. For about two to three weeks, he gave me instructions regarding Intuition. Afterwards I began to see the still higher planes. I am not satisfied with only a part, or a flash of Supermind, I want to bring down the whole mass of the Supermind pure, and that is an extremely difficult business.

Disciple: We hear that there will be a selected number of people who will first receive the Supermind.

Sri Aurobindo (*making a peculiar expression with his eyes*)**:** Selected by whom?

Disciple: By the Supermind, Sir?

Sri Aurobindo (*laughing*)**:** Oh, then that is for the Supermind to decide. Whatever is the Truth will be done by it, for it is Truth-Consciousness. When things are established in the course of time by it your complaint about the disappearance of calm, etc., will disappear, for they will be established by the Supermind.

Disciple: Will the descent of Supermind make things easier for us?

Sri Aurobindo: It will do so for those who receive the Supermind, who are open to it; for example, if there are thirty or forty people ready it could descend.

Disciple: You said that in 1934 Supermind was ready to descend but not a single sadhak was found prepared, so it withdrew. But you told me once that the descent of the Supermind does not depend on the readiness of sadhaks.

Sri Aurobindo: If none is ready to receive how will the Supermind manifest itself? But instead of thinking of the Supermind one has first to open oneself to Intuition.

(*At this time Mother came and asked about what we were talking*.)

Sri Aurobindo: About intuition, etc.

(*Then as Mother went into meditation we all joined. Mother left for the collective meditation downstairs at about 7 p.m.*)

Sri Aurobindo: Does anyone know about S? I am curious to know how, as he puts it, his blood came out drop by drop from his body. He seems to have an Elizabethan turn of expression!

(*Then, with reference to S and N, the sadhaks who had been expelled, the topic turned to the question of fear of death: How they even covered themselves up for fear of catching cold, etc. Sri Aurobindo recalled an incident at Cambridge: Once they were discussing physical development: one fellow took off his shirt and then his banians one after another — they found that there were ten or twelve on his body!*)

Disciple: There are people who think that as soon as they have

entered the Ashram they have become immortal! We must develop our consciousness in order to conquer death, is it not?

Sri Aurobindo: People think so because for a long time no death took place in the Ashram. Those who died were either visitors or who had gone back from here. In the beginning people had strong faith but as the number increased, the faith began to diminish. But why should one fear death? Besides, fear has no place in Yoga. The soul is immortal and the body passes. The soul goes from one life to another.

Disciple: We fear because of our attachments.

Sri Aurobindo: One must have no attachments in Yoga.

Disciple: How to conquer fear?

Sri Aurobindo: By mental strength, will and spiritual power. In my own case, whenever there was any fear I used to do the very things that I was afraid of even if it entailed a violent death. Barin also had much fear while he was in the revolutionary activities. But he would compel himself to do those things. When the death sentence was passed on him he took it very cheerfully. Henry IV, King of France, had a great physical fear but by his mental will he would compel himself to rush into the thick of the battle and was known as a great warrior. Napolean and Caesar had no fear. Once when Caesar was fighting the forces of Pompey in Albania, Caesars army was faring badly. Caesar was at that time in Italy. He jumped into a fisherman's boat and asked him to carry him across the sea to Albania. On the way a storm arose and the fisherman was mortally afraid. Then Caesar said "Why do you fear? You are carrying the fortunes of Caesar."

I remember a sadhak under an attack of hiccup saying, "If it goes on I will die." I told him, "What does it matter if you die?" and the hiccup stopped! Very often, these fears and suggestions bring in the adverse forces which then catch hold of the person. By my blunt statement the sadhak realised his folly and did not allow any more

suggestions.

Disciple: Is Barin still doing Yoga?

Sri Aurobindo: I don't know. He used to do some sort of Yoga even before I began. In the Andamans also he was practising it. My Yoga he took up only after coming to Pondicherry.

You know he was Lele's disciple. Once he took Lele to Calcutta among the young people of the secret society. Lele did not know that they were revolutionaries. One day Barin took him into the garden where they were practising shooting. As soon as Lele saw it he understood the nature of the movement and asked Barin to give it up. If Barin did not listen to him, Lele said, he would fall into a ditch — and he did fall.

Disciple: Barin, I heard, had a lot of experiences.

Sri Aurobindo: They were merely mental and he gathered some knowledge, much information or understanding out of them. I heard that when he had begun yoga he had an experience of *kāmānanda.* Lele was surprised to hear about it. For he said that experience comes usually at the end. It is a descent like any other experience but unless one's sex centre is sufficiently controlled it may produce bad results such as emission and other disturbances.

Disciple: Yes. He had brilliance.

Sri Aurobindo: But he was always narrow and limited. He would not widen himself (*Sri Aurobindo showed it by the movement of hands above the head*)I that is why his things won't last. He was a brilliant writer and he also wrote devotional poetry, but nothing of that will last because of this limitation. He was an amazing amateur in many things, e.g. music, revolutionary activity, etc. He was also a painter, though it did not come to much in spite of his exhibitions. He did well in all these but nothing more.

Disciple: Barin in his paper *Dawn* began to write your biography.

Sri Aurobindo: I don't know that. Did he publish a paper? I would be interested to see what he wrote about me.

Disciple: It ceased after a short time.

Disciple: It was in that paper that he said you were the leader of the revolutionary movement. I asked you whether it was true.

Sri Aurobindo: And what did I say?

Disciple: You wrote back exclaiming with great surprise that what everyone knows you did not know.

Sri Aurobindo: In fact it is not true. That is what it is. Barin does not give the true state of things. I was neither the founder nor the leader. It was P. Mitra and Miss Ghosal who started it at the inspiration of Baron Okakura. They had already started when I visited Bengal, and I came to know about it. I simply kept myself informed of their work. My idea was an open, armed revolution in the whole of India. What they did at that time was very childish, e.g., beating magistrates and so on. Later it turned into terrorism and dacoities etc. which were not at all my idea or intention. Bengal is too emotional, wants quick results and can't prepare through a long course of years. We wanted to give battle by creating a spirit in the race through guerilla warfare. But at the present stage of warfare such things are impossible and bound to fail.

Disciple: Then why did you not check it?

Sri Aurobindo: It is not good to check such things that press for strong expression when they have taken a strong step, for something good may come out of it.

Disciple: You did not appear in the riding test in your I.C.S.?

Sri Aurobindo: No, they gave me another chance. But again I did not appear and finally they rejected me.

Disciple: But why then did you appear in the I.C.S.? Was it by some intuition that you did not go for the riding test?

Sri Aurobindo: Not at all. I knew nothing of Yoga at that time. I

appeared for I.C.S. because my father wanted it and I was too young to understand. Later I found out what sort of work it is and I had a disgust for administrative life and I had no interest in administrative work. My interest was in poetry and literature and study of languages and patriotic action.

Disciple: We heard that you and C. R. Das used to make plans for revolution in India while in England.

Sri Aurobindo: Not only C. R. Das but many others. Deshpande was one.

Disciple: You used to write very strong memoranda for the Gaekwad; you once asked him to go and give it to the Resident personally.

Sri Aurobindo: That is legend. I could not have said so. Of course, I wrote many memoranda for the Maharaja. Generally he used to indicate the lines and I used to follow them. But I myself was not much interested in administration. My interest lay outside, in Sanskrit literature and in the national movement.

When I came to Baroda from England I found out what the Congress was at that time and formed a contempt for it. Then I came in touch with Deshpande, Tilak, Madhav Rao and others. Deshpande got me to write a series in the *Indu Prakash* (of which he was an editor). There I strongly criticised the Congress for its moderate policy. The articles were so fiery that M. G. Ranade, the great Maharashtrian leader, asked the proprietor of the paper (through Deshpande) not to allow such seditious things to appear in the paper, otherwise he might be arrested and imprisoned. Deshpande approached me with the news and requested me to write something less violent. I then began to write about the philosophy of politics, leaving aside the practical part of politics. But I soon got disgusted with it.

Along with Tilak, Madhav Rao, Deshmukh and Joshi (who became a moderate later) we were planning to work on more

extreme lines than the Congress. We brought Jatin Banerji from Bengal and put him in the Baroda army. Our idea was to drive moderates from the Congress and capture it.

As soon as I heard that the National College had been started in Bengal, I found my opportunity, threw off the Baroda job and went to Calcutta as the Principal. There I came in contact with Bipin Chandra Pal who was editing the *Bande Mataram.* But its financial condition was precarious and when Pal was going on a tour he asked me to take up the paper. I asked Subodh Mullick and others to finance the paper and went on editing it. Then some people wanted to oust Pal from the *Bande Mataram.* When I was lying ill in Deoghar, they removed his name and put mine as the editor. I called the sub-editor and gave him a severe thrashing, of course metaphorically. But the mischief was done.

Bipin Pal was a great orator, and at that time his speeches were highly inspired, a sort of a descent. Later on his power of oration also got diminished. I remember he never used the word independence but always said "Autonomy without British control". Later on, when after the Barisal Conference we brought the peasants into the movement, forty to fifty thousand of them used to gather to hear Pal. Suren Banerjee cannot stand comparison with Pal — he has never done anything like it; but he also lost his power later on. Pal was more of an orator, he had not the qualities of a leader. Then Shyamsundar and some other people joined the *Bande Mataram* staff, and the paper soon drew the attention of a large number of people and became an all-India paper.

One day I called the Bengal leaders and said, "It is no use simply going on like this. We must capture the Congress and throw out the moderate leaders from it." Then I proposed we follow Tilak as the all-India leader. They at once jumped at the idea. Tilak who was not then well-known in the Northern parts accepted the leadership. He was a really great man; a rare disinterested one.

Disciple: What do you think of his Gita? Was it inspired?

Sri Aurobindo: I must say I have not read it.

Disciple: But you have reviewed it!

Sri Aurobindo: Then I have reviewed it without having read it. (*Loud laughter*) Of course, I might have glanced through it. I don't think it is inspired. It is more a mental interpretation, for he had a brilliant mind.

Disciple: When someone asked Tilak what he would do when India got Swaraj, he said he would again become a professor of Mathematics.

Disciple: What about *Amrita Bazar Patrika*? It was also an extremist paper?

Sri Aurobindo: Never. It was impossible for it to write openly like the *Bande Mataram* and *Yugantar* about independence, guerilla warfare, day after day. It wanted safety first. At that time three extremist papers were running in Bengal: *Yugantar*, *Bande Mataram* and *Sandhya.* Brahma Bandhava Upadhyaya, editor of *Sandhya,* was another great man. He used to write so cleverly that the Government could not charge him. *Bande Mataram's* financial condition was bad and yet we carried on for two years.

Disciple: But did the Government not try to arrest you?

Sri Aurobindo: It could not. There was no such law and the Press had more liberty. Besides, there was nothing in these papers that could be directly charged against us. The *Statesman* used to complain that *Bande Mataram* was full of sedition from end to end and yet was so cleverly written that the editor couldn't be arrested. Moreover, the name of the editor was never published, so they could only arrest the printer. But when one was arrested another took his place. When Upen Banerji, a sub-editor, published some correspondence, I was arrested on charge of sedition, but as nothing could be proved I was acquitted. Later, when I was detained in the Alipore Jail, as the paper was disastrously up against financial difficulties, they wrote something very strong and *Bande Mataram*

was suppressed. After being acquitted, I started the *Karmayogin.* Once, when Sister Nivedita told me that the Government wanted to deport me, I published "An Open Letter to My Countrymen" and it prevented that prosecution. Later, when I heard the Government planned to arrest me, I went away secretly to Chandernagore. There some friends were thinking of sending me to France. I was thinking what to do next. Then I heard the *adesh* to go to Pondicherry.

Disciple: Why to Pondicherry?

Sri Aurobindo: I could not question. It was Sri Krishna's Adesh. I had to obey. Later on I found it was for the Ashram and for the Work.

I had to apply for a passport under a false name. The shipping company required a medical certificate by an English doctor. After a great deal of trouble I found out one and went to his house. He told me that I could speak English remarkably well. I replied that I had been to England.

Disciple: You took the certificate under a false name?

(*I was a little surprised to hear he had disguised himself under a false name. So the question*.)

Sri Aurobindo: Of course. If I had given my real name, I would have been at once arrested. With due respect to Gandhis truth, I could not be exacdy precise about my name, otherwise you can't be a revolutionary.

Accompanied by Bijoy and preceded by Moni and followed by Saurin, I arrived in Pondicherry but we had to assume false names for some time.

22 DECEMBER 1938

All of us assembled in the hope of hearing something from Sri Aurobindo. I was actually praying for it. But he did not seem to be in a talking mood. So we were forced to keep quiet, at the same time thinking how to draw him into conversation and by what question. Suddenly we find X beaming and looking at Sri Aurobindo. Then he takes a few steps nearer to Sri Aurobindo and we automatically follow him. He still nears and then bursts out with a question: "To attain the right attitude what principles should we follow in our dealing and behaviour with others?" Sri Aurobindo could not quite catch the question so it was repeated.

Sri Aurobindo: It seems to me the other way about. If we have the right attitude other things come by themselves. Right attitude is necessary, but what is important is the inner state. Spiritual and ethical principles are quite different, for everything depends on whether it is done for the sake of the Spirit or for ethical reasons. One may observe mental control in his dealings but the inner state may be quite different. For instance, he may not show anger, may be humble externally, but internally he may be proud and full of anger. For example A, when he came here, was full of humility outside. It is the psychic control that is required and when that is there right attitude follows in ones external behaviour. Conduct must flow from within outwards and the more one opens to the psychic influence the more it gains over the outer nature. Mental control may or may not lead to the spiritual. In people of a certain type it may be the first step towards psychic control.

Disciple: How to get psychic control?

Sri Aurobindo: By constant remembrance, consecration of ourselves to the Divine, rejection of all that stands in the way of the psychic influence. Generally, it is the vital that stands in the way with its desires and demands. And once the psychic opens it shows at every step what is to be done.

At the later stage of the conversation Mother came and soon after we all went into meditation with her. After her departure at about 7 p.m. Sri Aurobindo resumed.

Sri Aurobindo (*to X*)**:** What is the idea behind your question? Something personal or a general question?

Disciple: I meant, for instance, how to see God in everybody, how to love all and have goodwill for all.

Sri Aurobindo: One has to start with the idea of goodwill for all. To consecrate oneself to the Divine, try to see God in others, have a psychic goodwill and in oneself reject all vital and mental impulses, and on that basis proceed towards the realization. The idea must pass into experience. Once the realization is there, it becomes easy. Even then, it is easy in the static aspect, but when it comes to the dynamic experience it becomes difficult. For example, when one finds a man behaving like a brute it is very difficult to see God in him unless one separates him from his outer nature and sees the Divine behind. One can repeat the Name of the Divine and come to a divine consciousness.

Disciple: How does Name do it?

Sri Aurobindo: Name is a power, like a Mantra. Everything in the world is power. There are some who do Pranayama along with the Name. After a time the repetition behind the Pranayama becomes automatic and one feels the Divine Presence. Here people once began to feel tremendous force in their work. They could work without fatigue for hours and hours, but they began to overdo it. One has to be reasonable even in spirituality. That was when the Sadhana was in the vital. But when it began in the physical then things were different. The physical is like a stone, full of inertia and resistance.

Disciple: Sometimes one feels a sort of love for everybody; though the feeling lasts for a few seconds it gives a great joy.

Sri Aurobindo: That is a wave from the psychic. But what is

your attitude towards it? Do you take it as a passing mood or does it stimulate you to have further experiences of that sort?

Disciple: It stimulates but sometimes vital mixture tries to come in. Fortunately I could drive it out recently.

Sri Aurobindo: That is the risk. The fact that the mixture tried to come in means that the wave came through the inner vital and thus took something from the vital. In the vital one has to be very careful in order to avoid sex impurities. In spite of his occasional outburst of violence, B was a very nice and affectionate man; but he used to get his psychic experiences mixed up with the sex-impulse and the experiences were spoiled. This happens because sometimes one gives a semi-justification to sex-impulses. But sex is absolutely out of place in Yoga. In ordinary life it has a certain place for a certain purpose. Of course, if you adopt the *Sahaja Marga*, it is different.

While I was in jail, I knew a man who had a power of concentration by which he tried to make everyone love him, and he succeeded. The warders and others around him were drawn towards him. Of course, one must know the process of concentration.

Disciple: That is just what we don't know! (*Laughter*)

Sri Aurobindo: The mind must be made quiet and the consciousness turned — not only mentally — towards the aim. It no doubt takes time but that is the way. There are no devices for these things.

Disciple: What difference is there between modification of nature and its transformation?

Sri Aurobindo: Transformation is the casting of the whole nature in the mould of your realisation. What you realise you project out in your nature. Christian saints speak of the presence in the heart. That presence can change the nature.

I speak of three transformations: psychic, spiritual, and

supramental. Psychic transformation many have had; the spiritual is the realisation of the Self, the Infinite above, with its dynamic and static sides of peace, knowledge, Ananda, etc. And above that is the Supramental transformation. It is the Truth-Consciousness working for a Divine aim or purpose.

Disciple: If one has the inner realisation, does transformation follow in the light of that realisation?

Sri Aurobindo: Not necessarily. There may be some modification in the nature-part but the transformation is not automatic. It is not so easy as all that. My experience of peace and calm in the first contact with Lele has never left me, but in my outer nature there were many agitations and every time I had to make an effort to establish peace there. From that time onwards the whole object of my Yoga was to change the nature into the mould of the inner realisation. I had to try to transform it by the influence of my realisation.

Disciple: Could a man with true realisation — I don't mean experience — have grave difficulties such as the sex-impulse in his nature?

Sri Aurobindo: Why not? There can be anger, like Durvasa's, or sex. You have not heard of the fall of Rishis through anger or through sex? The Yogis pass beyond the stage of good and evil. Ordinary questions of morality don't arise in them. They may look upon outer nature as a child behaving according to its wants. I think Z's fall came in that way. He had gone into the higher mind, perhaps, not even to the overmind state; he used to be guided by an inner voice which he accepted as the voice of the Divine and did everything in the light of that voice. When people were asking him about his conduct, I am told, he replied that it was by the voice of God and that every Siddha had done that. You have heard of Agamyananda Swami who went to London? He was arrested in England for making advances to women in public places.

Disciple: Would not the inner realisation stop because of these outer indulgences?

Sri Aurobindo: It depends on how far one has gone on the path of spiritual realisation. There are any number of passages, crossways and paths; one may be at liberty to follow whatever yoga one likes. But in our Yoga we insist on the transformation of the outer nature as well. And when I say something is necessary in Yoga, it means in "our Yoga"; it does not apply to yoga with other aims.

There was a lull for some time after this. Then Sri Aurobindo asked: Do you know anything about M?

Disciple: My impression was not favourable. I was not personally attracted by him.

Sri Aurobindo: When I saw his photo I had an impression that he is a man with strong vital power. When I saw that he was advertising about himself as a Messiah I began to doubt his genuineness. His sadhana seems to be in the vital and it is in such cases that the power descends and unfortunately people are attracted by these powers. In the spiritual and psychic, even in the mental sadhana, power can come, but it comes automatically without ones asking for it.

Y was another M, with a powerful vital being. At one time I had strong hopes about him. But people whose sadhana is on a vital basis pass into what I have called the Intermediate Zone and hardly go beyond. The vital is like a jungle and it is extremely difficult to rescue one with such a vital power. It is comparatively much easier to help people who are weak and have no such power. Y used to think that he had put himself in the Divine's hand and the Divine was in him. We had to be severe with him to disillusion him of his idea. That is why he could not remain here. He went back and became a guru with about thirty or forty disciples round him.

Gurugiri comes very easily to these people. He did all that in my name which I heartily disliked. Unfortunately his mind was not equally powerfully developed as his vital. He had the fighter's mind, not the thinker's. We often put a strong force on him and as a result he used to become very lucid for a time and he could see his wrong movements. But immediately his vital rushed back and took control of his mind and it all used to be wiped out. If his mind had been as developed perhaps he would have been able to retain the clarity. The intellect helps one to separate oneself from the vital and look at it dispassionately. The mind also can deceive but not so much.

M is another of this type.

Disciple: Why did he go away from here?

Sri Aurobindo: Because he wanted to be an Avatar and because he could not get rid of the attachment to his work. He is very unscrupulous.

Disciple: Has he some power?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. But not an occult power like the other. Before that he was quite an ordinary man with some possibilities. When I came out of the jail, you know, I was staying in his house and I was full of a certain force. He got a share of it.

Disciple: How?

Sri Aurobindo: He was doing some kind of yoga. I gave him some instructions. From them he got his power.

Disciple: Was he working on your idea?

Sri Aurobindo: When I was leaving Bengal I thought it might be possible to work through him on condition that he remained faithful to me. That he could never be. His own self came to the front though the original push was from me, now it is not my force that is working there. These things become easily unspiritualised.

Disciple: In his *Jīvan Saṇgini* he makes a lot of fuss over his wife.

Sri Aurobindo: She struck me as a commonplace woman though a good woman. She was a better woman than he was a man. I saw her only once by chance as she was not used to coming out before men.

Disciple: He has developed a powerful Bengali style.

Sri Aurobindo: Is that so? He was once translating the Veda into Bengali.

Disciple: His Bengali, you know, was like a Christian missionary's Bengali. You know what it is like.

23 DECEMBER 1938

We assembled as usual, and were eager to resume the talk. But nobody could begin without some hint or gesture from Sri Aurobindo. He was lying calmly in his bed. One of us approached him half hesitatingly. This made X roar with laughter. Sri Aurobindo heard the laughter and asked: "Whats the matter?"

Disciple: X is roaring with laughter.

Sri Aurobindo: Descent of Ananda?

(*This preliminary breaking of the ice made the atmosphere a little encouraging. So, catching the chance, I shot the following question with a beaming face.*)

Disciple: Because the hostile forces offer resistance to the Divine manifestation in the world and some of them become sometimes victorious (at least for the time being) can one logically say that the Divine lacks Omnipotence? It is not my question but somebody else's.

Sri Aurobindo: It depends on what you mean by Omnipotence. If the idea is that God must always succeed then we must conclude

that he is not Omnipotent. Do you mean to say that he must always succeed against the resistance and then only he may be called Omnipotent? People have very queer ideas of Omnipotence. Resistance is the law of evolution. Resistance comes from ignorance and ignorance is a part of inconscience: the whole thing starts from inconscience. At the very beginning when the opposition between Ignorance and Knowledge was created, there was the very denial of the Divine. It is his Lila that the manifestation shall proceed through resistance and struggle. What kind of Lila is it in which one side goes on winning? Divine Omnipotence generally works through the universal law. There are forces of Light and forces of Darkness. To say that the forces of Light shall always succeed is the same as saying that truth and good shall always succeed, though there is no such thing as unmixed truth and unmixed good. Divine Omnipotence intervenes only at critical or decisive moments.

Every time the Light has tried to descend it has met with resistance and opposition. Christ was crucified. You may say, "Why should it be like that when he was innocent?" and yet that was the Divine dispensation. Buddha was denied. Sons of Light come, the earth denies and rejects them; afterwards, accepts them in name to reject them in substance. Only a small minority grows towards a spiritual birth, and it is through them that the Divine manifestation takes place. What remains of Buddhism today except a few decrees of Asoka and a few hundred thousand Buddhists?

Disciple: Asoka helped in propagating Buddhism.

Sri Aurobindo: Anybody could have done that.

Disciple: But it is through his aid that it became all-powerful.

Sri Aurobindo: If kings and emperors had left Buddhism to those people who were really spiritual it would have been much better for real Buddhism. It was after Constantine embraced Christianity that it began to decline. The King of Norway, on whom Longfellow wrote a poem, killed all who were not Christians and

thus succeeded in establishing Christianity! The same happened to Mohammedanism. When it succeeded, the followers of the Prophet became Khalifas; after them the religion declined. It is not kings and emperors that keep alive spirituality but people who are really spiritual that do so.

Disciple: Asoka sacrificed everything for Buddhism.

Sri Aurobindo: But he remained emperor till the end. When kings and emperors try to spread religion they become like Asoka, i.e., make the whole thing mechanical, and the inner truth is lost.

Disciple: Ramana Maharshi was known to no one. It was Brunton who made him widely known.

Sri Aurobindo: It is a strange measure of success people adopt in judging a Yogi by the number of disciples. Who was greater — Ramana Maharshi who did his Sadhana in seclusion for years or Ramana Maharshi surrounded by all sorts of disciples? Success, to be real, must be spiritual. At times, when some spiritual movement begins to succeed then the real thing begins to be lost.

Once, one Mrs. K went to see Maharshi and was seen fidgeting due to mosquitoes at the time of meditation. Later she complained to him of mosquito bites. Maharshi told her that if she couldn't bear mosquito bites she couldn't do Yoga. Mrs. K could not understand the significance of the statement. She wanted spirituality without mosquitoes!

There are reports that those who stay there permanently are not all in agreement with each other.

Do you know that famous story about Maharshi? Once, disgusted with the Ashram and the disciples, he was going away into the mountains. While passing through a narrow path flanked by the hills, he came upon an old woman sitting with her legs across the path. Maharshi begged her to draw aside her legs but she would not. When Maharshi crossed over them, she became very angry and said, "Why are you so restless? Why can't you sit in one

place at Arunachala instead of moving about? Go back to your place and worship Shiva there." Her remarks struck him and he retraced his steps. After going some distance he looked back and found that there was nobody there. Suddenly it struck him that it was the Divine Mother herself who wanted him to remain at Arunachala.

Of course it was the Divine Mother who asked him to go back. Maharshi is intended to lead this sort of life. He has nothing to do with what happens around him. He remains calm and detached. The man is what he was.

By the way, I am glad to hear about the Maharshi shouting at some Indian Christians. It means he can also become dynamic.

The only Ashram in which there was great unity, I heard, was Thakur Dayanand's. There was a strong sense of unity among them. I wrote an article on the Avatar in *Karmayogin.* Mahendra Dey, a disciple of Dayanand's, seeing the article wrote to me, "He is the Avatar." He was very enthusiastic about it.

Disciple: Why are Gurus obliged to work with imperfect and defective people like us? Here the difficulty seems to be more keen.

Sri Anrobindo: That has been a puzzle to me also. But it is so. Our case is a little different. Our aim is to change the world — not universally, of course. Hence every one here represents human nature with all its difficulties and capacities. (*Looking at the disciple*) That's how your difficulties are explained.

26 DECEMBER 1938

At about 5.30 p.m., four of us were seated on the carpet beside Sri Aurobindo's cot, talking in low whispers. X broke into suppressed laughter in the course of the talk and ran out. Later, at about 6.30

p.m., we all assembled by the side of Sri Aurobindo. He looked round and referring to the laughter asked: "What was the divine descent about?"

Disciple: X had his usual outburst of laughter.

Sri Aurobindo: Oh, it was the descent of Vishnu's Ananda!

Disciple: It is very peculiar how I break out into uncontrolled laughter so easily. Formerly, I used to weep at the slightest provocation. I think it is because I live in the external consciousness only that I laugh so easily. Is it not?

Sri Aurobindo: It is the reaction of the superficial vital which is touched easily by simple, outward things; there is a child in the nature that bursts out like that. It is the same as the *bālabhāva* — the child-like nature. The deeper vital being does not get so easily touched.

Disciple: What is meant by self-offering? How to do it?

Sri Aurobindo: How to do it? One offers ones vital, mind and heart, rejecting the attachments, passions, etc., and grows into the Divine consciousness.

Disciple: What time is more propitious for meditation — daytime or night-time? I get more concentrated at night.

Sri Aurobindo: It may be due to the calm and quiet atmosphere, and also because you are accustomed to it. Nights and early mornings are supposed to be the best for meditation.

We ask people to have a fixed time for meditation, for, if they are habituated to it then the response comes at that time due to *abhyāsa.* Lele had asked me to meditate twice but when he came to Calcutta he heard that I did not do it. He did not give me time to explain that my meditation was going on all the time. He simply said: "The Devil has caught you."

Disciple: Sometimes meditation is automatic.

Sri Aurobindo: At that time you must sit, otherwise you feel uneasy.

Disciple: The other day I was having peace and Ananda, and I saw two visions. But I had to go to sleep, for I thought, if I kept it up at night I might fall ill. I saw the flower signifying sincerity in one vision.

Sri Aurobindo: Sincerity means to lift all our movements towards the Divine.

Disciple: The fear of falling ill by keeping awake, is it not a mental fear?

Sri Aurobindo: The thing is, the physical being has got a limit. The vital being can feel the energy, peace, etc., but the physical cannot be taxed beyond its capacity. That is what happened to many sadhaks here. They overworked till a reaction took place. The force comes for your particular work, not to increase the work or use it for other purposes. If you go on overdoing it then the natural reaction will come. There is a certain amount of reasonableness even in spirituality.

Disciple: At one time I also used to feel a lot of energy while I was working with the Mother and I was never fatigued even with working day and night. Only one or two hours of sleep was sufficient and I would feel as fresh as ever.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. That is because you opened yourself to the Energy. About sleep, even ten minutes of sleep may be enough, but of course, it is not ordinary sleep but going within. If you can draw the Force with equanimity and conserve it, these things can be done. As I said, many sadhaks felt that sort of thing when we were dealing with the Vital. But when the Sadhana came into the Physical there was not that push any more and people began to feel easily fatigued, lazy, and unwilling to work. They began to complain about ill-health due to overwork and were supported by the doctor. Do you know H's idea? He says people have come here

not for work but for meditation!

I dare say if we had not come down into the Physical and remained in the Vital and Mental like other Yogis without trying to transform them, then things would have been different.

At this point Mother came in and we meditated for some time. After she went away, our talk was resumed.

Disciple: N had a good meditation. He did not know that Mother had gone.

Disciple: How do you know I had a good meditation?

Sri Aurobindo: By the inclination of your head, perhaps.

Disciple: I cant say. I was having many incoherent dreams and visions — that is all I can say; perhaps it was in the surface consciousness.

Sri Aurobindo: Surface consciousness of the inner vital being. Such things are very common; of course, when one goes still deeper one does not see them. There is a point between the surface consciousness and the deeper vital which is full of fantasies and dreams. They are apparently incoherent. But when one gets the clue one finds that everything is a linked whole. That I have seen many times in my own case. In the physical a mouse turning into an elephant may have no meaning but it is not so in the vital. They have no coherence on the physical plane but they have their own coherence on the vital plane. It is this world from which Tagore's painting came — what Europeans call the goblin world.

Disciple: Does Tagore see them before drawing them?

Sri Aurobindo: I do not think so. Some see them but do not draw them. But they come to him. Anybody who has the least experience of these planes can at once say from where they come.

Disciple: But how is it that people think of them as — and he himself calls them — great paintings?

Sri Aurobindo: Everybody calls them "great and wonderful", so he himself comes to believe it so.

(*Then we began to talk about headaches, either due to physical cause or resistance*.)

Disciple: I have seen many times my headache start after Mother's touch at Pranam.

Sri Aurobindo: That may be because you passed from one state of consciousness to another.

Disciple: Unconsciously?

Sri Aurobindo: Why not? When from a state of concentration you mix with others just after the Pranam you can easily pass to another state. That is why Mother advises people to remain calm and quiet for some time after Pranam or meditation.

Disciple: I felt once as if my head were suspended in the air and the other parts of the body did not exist.

Sri Aurobindo: That is separation of the mental consciousness.

Disciple: Are you able to know what experiences sadhaks are having, especially if they are decisive ones?

Sri Aurobindo: I don't. But Mother knows. Whenever it is a question of consciousness she can see in the sadhak whatever changes are taking place. When she meditates with him she can know what line he is following — the line she indicates or his own — and afterwards what changes have been brought about in the consciousness.

Disciple: And when the sadhak experiences something, is it imparted by you?

Sri Aurobindo: What is the use of giving our own things to them? Let them have their own growth. I may put in a force for people who are in a bad condition, people who are always going wrong, and try to work it out so that the condition might improve. If the sadhak co-operates then it is comparatively easy. Otherwise, if

the sadhak is passive then the result takes a long time; it comes, goes again, returns, like that, and ultimately the force prevails. In the case of B, we used to put in a strong force and he would become lucid and then the whole vital used to rush up and catch hold of him. Whereas if the sadhak actively participates then it takes only one-tenth of the time.

27 DECEMBER 1938

Sri Aurobindo himself opened the talk today by addressing X and said, "I hear D is going about in his car with a guard by his side and two cyclist policemen in front and back." Then the talk continued regarding Pondicherry politics, most of it by us.

Sri Aurobindo: When I see Pondicherry and Calcutta Corporation I begin to wonder why I was so eager for democracy. They are two object-lessons which can take away all enthusiasm for self-government.

Disciple: Was the Calcutta Corporation so bad before the Congress came there?

Sri Aurobindo: No. There was not so much scope for corruption — at least we didn't know of such scandals. It is the same thing with other municipal administrations. In New York and Chicago the whole machinery is corrupt. Sometimes the head of the institution is like that. Sometimes a mayor comes up with the intention of cleaning out the whole, but one does not know after the cleansing which one was better. One of the mayors of Chicago was a great criminal but all judges and police-officers were in his pay. In France also it is the same thing. It is not surprising that people get disgusted with Democracy.

England is comparatively less corrupt. The English are the only

people who know how to work the parliamentary system. Parliamentary government is in their blood.

Disciple: It seems that our old Indian system was the best for us. How could it succeed so well?

Sri Aurobindo: The old Indian system grew out of life, it had room for everything and every interest. There were monarchy, aristocracy, democracy. Every interest was represented in the government, while the Western system grew out of the mind. In Europe they are led by reason and want to make everything cut and dry without any chance of freedom or variation. If it is democracy, then democracy only and no room for anything else. They cannot be plastic.

India is now trying to imitate the West. Parliamentary government is not suited to India. But we always take up what the West has thrown off. Sir Akbar wanted to try a new sort of government with an impartial authority at the head. There, in Hyderabad, the Hindu majority complains that though Mahommedans are in minority they occupy most of the offices in the state. By Sir Akbar's method almost every interest would have been represented in the Government and automatically the Hindus would have come in, but because of their cry of responsible government the scheme failed. They have a fixed idea in the mind and want to fit everything into it. They can't think for themselves and so take up what the others are throwing off.

Disciple: It is possible in Hyderabad which has a Nizam, but how to do the same in an Indian Constitution? What is your idea of an ideal Government for India?

Sri Aurobindo: Sir Akbar's is as good as any. My idea is like what Tagore once wrote. There may be one Rashtrapati at the top with considerable powers so as to secure a continuity of policy and an assembly representative of the nation. The provinces will combine into a federation, united at the top, leaving ample scope to

local bodies to make laws according to their local problems. Mussolini started with the fundamentals of the Indian system but afterwards began bullying and bluffing other nations for the sake of imperialism. If he had persisted in his original idea, he would have been a great creator.

Disciple: Dr. Bhagwandas suggested that there should be legislators above the age of forty, completely disinterested like the Rishis.

Sri Aurobindo: A Chamber of Rishis! That would not be very promising. They will at once begin to quarrel — *nānā munir nānā mat*, as they say. Rishis in ancient times could guide kings because they were distributed over various places.

Disciple: His idea is of gathering all great men together.

Sri Aurobindo (*laughing*)**:** And let them quarrel like Kilkenny cats, I suppose.

The Congress at the present stage — what is it but a Fascist organisation? Gandhi is the dictator, like Stalin — I wont say like Hitler. What Gandhi says they accept and even the Working Committee follows him. Then it goes to A.I.C.C. which adopts it and then the Congress. There is no opportunity for any difference of opinion except for Socialists who are allowed to differ. Whatever resolutions the Congress passes are obligatory on all the provinces whether the resolutions suit them or not. There is no room for any other independent opinion. Everything is fixed up before and the people are only allowed to talk over it — like in Stalin's Duma. When we started the movement, we began with the idea of throwing out the Congress oligarchy and opening the whole organisation to the general mass.

Disciple: Srinivas Aiyangar retired from Congress because of his differences with Gandhi. He objected to Gandhi's giving the movement a religious turn and bringing religion into politics.

Sri Aurobindo: He made Charkha an article of religious faith

and excluded all people from Congress membership who could not spin. How many believe in his gospel of Charkha? Such a tremendous waste of energy, just for the sake of a few annas is most unreasonable.

Disciple: He made that rule perhaps to enforce discipline?

Sri Aurobindo: Discipline is all right but once you centralise, you go on centralising.

Disciple: It failed in agricultural provinces and seems to have succeeded in other places, especially where people had no occupation.

Disciple: In Bengal it didn't succeed.

Sri Aurobindo: In Bengal it did not. It may be all right as a famine-relief measure, but when it takes the form of an all-India programme it looks absurd. If you form a programme that is suited to the condition of the agricultural people it sounds somewhat reasonable. Give them education, technical training and give them the fundamentals or principles of organisation, not on political but on business lines. But Gandhi does not want any such industrial organisation and so he comes in with his magical formula "Spin, spin, spin." C. R. Das and others could act as a balance against him. It is all a fetish.

Denmark and Ireland organised their agriculture in the same way. Only now they are going to suffer because other nations are trying to be self-sufficient. I don't believe in that sort of self-sufficiency. For that is against the principles of life. It is not possible for nations to be self-sufficient like that.

Disciple: What do you think of Hindi being the common language? It seems to me English has occupied so much place that it will be unwise and difficult to replace it.

Sri Aurobindo: English will be all right and even necessary if India is to be an international State. In that case English has to be

the medium of expression, especially as English is now replacing French as a world-language. But the national spirit won't allow it and also it is a foreign language. At the same time Hindi can't replace English in the universities nor the provincial languages. When the national spirit grows it is difficult to say what will happen. In Ireland before the revolution they wanted to abolish English and adopt Gaelic but as time went on and things settled themselves their enthusiasm waned and English came back.

Disciple: I do not understand why the Jews are being so much persecuted by Hitler.

Disciple: I understand that the Jews betrayed Germany during the war.

Sri Aurobindo: Nonsense! On the contrary they helped Germany a great deal. It is because they are a clever race that others are jealous of them. For anything that is wrong they point to the Jews — it is so much more easy than finding the real cause. Or because people want something or somebody to blame and so the popular cry, "The Jews, the Jews." You remember I told you about the prophecy regarding the Jews that when they will be persecuted and driven to Jerusalem that the Golden Age shall come? It is the Jews that have built Germany's commercial fleet and her navy. The contribution of the Jews towards the world's progress in every branch is remarkable.

But this sort of dislike exists among other nations also, e.g., the English do not like the Scots, because the Scots have beaten the English in commercial affairs. There was a famous story in *Punch*: Two people were talking. One asked, "Bill, who is that man?" and Bill answered, "Let us strike at him, he is a stranger."

And then in Bengal the West Bengal people used to call East Bengal people *Bāngāl* and composed a satire, *Bāngāl mānūsh noye, oi ekta jontu.* At one time I used to wear socks at all times of the year. The West Bengalis used to sneer at that, saying, "You are a *Bāngāl*"

They thought that they were the most civilised people on earth. It is a legacy from the animal world, just as dogs of one street do not like dogs of another.

Disciple: But things will improve, I hope?

Sri Aurobindo: If this goes, you may be sure that the Golden Age is coming! All my opinions are of course on the basis of the present conditions. But the things would be quite different if the Supermind came down.

Disciple: You are tempting us too much with your Supermind. But will it really benefit the whole of mankind?

Sri Aurobindo: It will exert a certain upward pull but in order that it may bring about a considerable change, that it may be efficient, two hundred sadhaks of the Ashram can't be enough. It must be thousands whose influence can spread all over the world, who by actual test can prove that it is something superior to the means hitherto employed.

Disciple: Will it have a power over humanity?

Sri Aurobindo: We shall leave it to the Supermind to answer that question when it comes.

Disciple: The materialist and scientist say that Yogis have done nothing for human happiness. Buddhas and Avatars have come and gone but the sufferings of humanity are just the same.

Sri Aurobindo: Did Avatars come to relieve the sufferings of humanity? It was only Buddha who showed the way of release from suffering. But his path was to get away from the world and enter into Nirvana. Does mankind follow him? And if they do not and cannot get rid of their suffering, it is not Buddha's fault!

Disciple: They say that by scientific discoveries and medical inventions they have been able to improve the condition of the world, e.g., by cholera injections, smallpox vaccinations, the death rate is reduced.

Sri Aurobindo: And are they happy? Vaccination! Knowledgeable people say that vaccinations have done more harm than good.

Disciple: But that is the opinion of intellectuals and not of doctors.

Sri Aurobindo: Why, they have surely studied the subject before they gave their opinion? Doctors may have reduced cholera, etc., but what about the other things that they have brought in? Suffering cannot go as long as ignorance remains. Even after the Supermind descends the suffering will remain. If you choose to remain in suffering, how can it go?

Disciple: Doctors can compel people to take injections even against their will, and thus benefit them. Can spiritual Force do that? The Yogis have been busy with their own salvation while the world has remained just the same.

Sri Aurobindo: Evolution has proceeded from matter through animal to physical man, vital man, mental man and spiritual man. When mental man, or spiritual man, appears the others do not disappear. So, the tiger and serpent do not become man. In this upward growth of the human consciousness you cannot say that Buddha, Christ, and others, have played no part.

I consider the Supramental the culmination of the spiritual man. When the Supramental becomes established I expect that one will not be required to flee from life. It is something dynamic that changes life and nature. It will open the vital, mental and even the physical to the intuitive and overmental planes.

You want comfort and happiness: in that case, Truth and Knowledge are of no value.

The discoveries of modern science have outrun the human capacity to use them. The scientists don't know what to do with these discoveries and they have been used for the purposes of destruction. Now they are trying to kill men by throwing germs

from aeroplanes; smallpox and cholera at least end the suffering by death, but by bombing, etc., you mutilate for life.

Politics, science, even socialism, have not succeeded in finding a way out of suffering. They rally people to kill each other and involve the state into a peril — unless you say that murders and massacres are necessary. From this state of chaos and suffering people have been shown ways of escape, but those who have shown these ways, you say, are not useful!

No, no, all that is a superficial view of things. One has to consider the whole civilisation before one can pass an opinion.

It is because Western civilisation is failing that people like Aldous Huxley are drawn to Yoga.

28 DECEMBER 1938

At about 5.30 p.m. X burst into a peal of laughter to which Sri Aurobindo reacted by asking: "What is that dynamic explosion?" There was no reply, only a silence of suppression. But around 6:30 p.m. the joke was repeated and X complained to Sri Aurobindo that Y was making him laugh. The reply was: "Take care that he does not make you go off like a firework!" Then all assembled by the side of the cot and there was complete quiet. Y yawned and X started mocking him. The result was a subdued bubble of laughter. Sri Aurobindo could hardly fail to notice it. He asked: "What is the joke?"

Disciple: X is mocking at my yawning.

Sri Aurobindo: He does not know that yawning may be a fatal symptom?

(*There was reference to a letter from another sadhak relating his*

symptom of yawning at night)

Disciple: What medicine has been given to him for his perennial sickness?

Disciple: That is a secret.

Sri Aurobindo: That reminds me of the science of Augury in Greece. There used to be government augurs who used to be called in to interpret omens and signs; and from that a College of Augury came into existence. There, in the college, the professors used to be quite grave and serious — they gave lectures on Augury with grave faces; but when afterwards they met together they used to laugh among themselves.

By the way, we have got mutilated radio news today. They have dropped two important words. Instead of saying the Italians are "planning to march" into Djibouti, they have said the Italians are "marching" into it. If the Italians march into Djibouti, the French can march into Tripoli as counter-attack.

Disciple: The French can also organise the Abyssinians against Italy.

Sri Aurobindo: There wont be time for that.

Disciple: The Italians don't seem to be good soldiers.

Sri Aurobindo: No. I will be greatly surprised if they can defeat the French. In that case Mussolini must have changed the Italian character tremendously.

Disciple: They had a hard time in Abyssinia.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. It was by their air-bombs and mustard-gas poisoning that they succeeded.

Disciple: But they will be aided by the Germans.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, Italy can't do without Germany.

Disciple: Fisher, the historian, says that the German army in the last war was the greatest and the best army ever organised in the

world.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. They are the most organised and able soldiers in the world excepting the Japanese. But the Japanese are numerically less and financially poorer.

Even so during the last war the Germans could not throw up any remarkable military genius like the French General Foch. If Foch had been made the Commander-in-Chief of the Allies sooner, the war would have ended much earlier.

The Balkan people and the Turks are also good fighters.

Disciple: What about the Sikhs and the Gurkhas?

Sri Aurobindo: They are unsurpassed. But a war depends not on fighters but on generals.

Disciple: The British consul here says that the Chinese are no good as soldiers and the Russians are good only in defensive warfare. The Germans are trying to advance into the Ukraine. After that Hitler might come to central Europe.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. But that will at once combine Russia, Poland, Rumania and Yugoslavia. These small powers will be afraid for their own safety.

Disciple: I don't understand why Germany joins Italy in attacking France. According to European astrology Hitler's stars are with him till December 1938.

Sri Aurobindo: Why, Hitler himself has said in his *Mein Kampf* that Germany is not safe without the destruction of France. And France says the same thing about Germany.

Disciple: I read in the paper today that a group of people in England are shouting that America belongs to them, as a counter move to Italian claims.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, they can claim Germany, and also Denmark and Italy too for that matter.

Disciple: The way these people are preparing seems that war is inevitable.

Sri Aurobindo: But we thought that they would not do anything till early next year. They have chosen this time, perhaps, because they think that France has been divided by the general strike. But war will bring the whole nation together at once. In any case, we find that the Germans are busy enjoying their Christmas.

Disciple: England, most probably, will have to ally herself with France.

Sri Aurobindo: You have seen what Chamberlain has said? "England is not obliged to help France in case of war with Italy." But if Italy combines with Germany one can't say what England will do.

Disciple: In case there is a general war India will have an opportunity for independence.

Sri Aurobindo: How?

Disciple: She will refuse to co-operate. I think the formation of the Congress Ministries were due to the threat of war in Europe.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, it was in order to conciliate the Indians.

29 DECEMBER 1938

A question of Dr. Savour was conveyed by one of the disciples.

Disciple: What is the connection between the causal body and the psychic being?

Sri Aurobindo: The psychic being is what is called Chaitya Purusha in the heart, while the causal body is part of the Superconscious. They are not the same.

Disciple: It is the Superconscious existence that later on is called "Self" in Vedanta. According to some people Ramana Maharshi has realised the Self.

Sri Aurobindo: From what Brunton has written it does not seem so. He speaks of the "voice in the heart", that would mean the psychic being.

At this point Mother came and asked: "What have you been speaking about?"

Sri Aurobindo: X has asked a question which does not hang together. *(Then he repeated the question.)*

Disciple: I have heard about Ramana Maharshi's experience from a direct disciple of his: "One day the heart centre opened and I began to hear 'I, I', and everywhere I saw this 'I'."

Disciple: Different spiritual persons say different things. How to find out which is the highest? Our own choice is not necessarily that of the highest.

Mother: Each one goes to the limit of his consciousness. I have met many persons in Europe, India and Japan practising Yoga under different masters. Each claimed that his realisation was the highest; he was quite sure about it and also quite satisfied with his condition, and yet each one was standing at a different place in consciousness and saying that he had attained the highest.

Disciple: But one can know what they mean by some criterion?

Mother: By what criterion? If you ask them they say, "It is something wonderful but can't be described by the mind." I was with Tagore in Japan. He claimed to have reached the peace of Nirvana and he was beaming with joy. I thought: "Here is a man who claims to have got the peace and reached Nirvana. Let us see." I asked him to meditate with me and I followed him in meditation and found that he had reached just behind the mind into a sort of

emptiness. I waited and waited to see if he would go further; I wanted to follow him, but he would not go any further. I found that he was supremely satisfied and believed that he had entered Nirvana!

Disciple: But there is a fundamental realisation of some kind?

Mother: That is to say, there is a fundamental truth of consciousness. But that is not so easy to reach.

Disciple: How to choose a master, then? We must know whom to choose.

Disciple: How are you going to know with your mind where he has reached?

Disciple: Is not our choice decided by the psychic being in us?

Mother: That is another question. First you must realise about the limit of consciousness and the difference of the place where people stand.

The choice is mostly in answer to your need and it is governed by your inner necessity. Sometimes, the choice is made by the sort of instinct by which animals find the right place for their food. Only, in human beings it acts from within. If you allow your mind to discuss and argue then the instinct becomes veiled. When you have made the choice the mind naturally wants to believe that it is the highest you have chosen. But that is subjective.

Disciple: If the choice is right one feels happiness and satisfaction.

Mother: Satisfaction? One can't depend upon feelings and sensations, for, very often they misguide. Satisfaction is quite a different thing. There are people who are not satisfied in the best conditions, while in the worst conditions some are quite satisfied.

Look at the people in the world around: some are very happy with their conditions; and there are some whose satisfaction depends upon their liver — a brutally materialistic state. Also there

are people who suffer extremely and yet their inmost being knows that that is their path for reaching the goal.

Disciple: There are certain *lakshanas* — signs — given by the Shastras by which one can judge.

Sri Aurobindo: What Shastras? One can't believe in all that is said in the Shastras.

Mother: Besides, that may be all right for Indians; what about the Europeans? You can't say that they have not realised any truth.

Then the Mother took her leave and went for meditation. There was a pause of silence for some time. Then Sri Aurobindo asked: "What are the *lakshanas* you spoke of ?"

Disciple: They arc common and found everywhere. They are given in the Gita: equality, love for others, even-mindedness, etc.

Sri Aurobindo: These are, rather, conditions for realisation. All experiences are true and have their place. But because one is true one can't say that the other is false. Truth is infinite. There are so many ways to come to the Truth. The wider you become, the higher you go, the more you find that there is still more and more. For instance, the Maharshi has his experience of 'I'. But when I had the Nirvana experience I could not think of an 'I' — however much I tried I could not think of any 'I'. It simply got displaced. One can't speak of it as 'I'. It is either 'He' or 'That' — I call it Laya. Realisation of the Self is all right; Laya is a part of a realisation which is much more comprehensive. When I do not accept Mayavada it is not that I have not realised the Truth behind it or that I don't know "the One in All" and "All in the One", — but because I have other realisations which are equally strong and which cannot be shut out. The Maharshi is right and everybody else is also right.

When the mind tries to understand these things, it takes up fragments and treats them as wholes and makes unreal distinctions.

They speak of Nirguna as the fundamental experience and Saguna as derivative or secondary. But what does the Upanishad mean by Ananta Nirguna and Ananta Saguna? They can't be thought of as different. When you think of Impersonality as the fundamental Truth and Personality as something imposed upon it and therefore secondary, you cut across with your mind something which is beyond both. Or, is it not that Personality is the chief thing and Impersonality is only one side, or one condition of Personality? No. Personality and Impersonality are aspects of a thing which is indivisible. Shankara is right and so are Nimbarka and Madhava. Only, when they state their Truth in mental terms there is a tremendous confusion. Shankara says "It is *anirvacanīya* — indescribable by speech" and "All is One." Nimbarka says: "There is Duality and Unity"; while Madhava says: "Duality is true."

The Upanishads speak of "Him by knowing whom all is known." What does it mean? That *vijñāna* is not merely the fundamental realisation of the One. It means the knowledge of the principles of the Divine Being, what Krishna speaks of as *tattvataḥ*. One cannot know the complete Divine except in the Supermind. That is why Krishna said that one who knows him in the "true principles of his being" is rare, *kaścit*. The Upanishads also speak of the Brahman as *catuṣpada* — having four feet or aspects. They do not merely state "All is the Brahman" and it is over. The realisation of the Self is not all. There are many things beyond that. The Divine Guide within me urged me to proceed, adding experience after experience, reaching higher and higher, stopping at none as final, till I arrived at a glimpse of the Supermind. There I found the Truth indivisible and there everything takes its proper place. There, Nirguna and Saguna — Impersonality and Personality — don't exist. They are all aspects of One Truth which is indivisible.

At the Overmind stage knowledge begins to rush in upon you from all sides and you see the objects and situations from all points of view. All of them tend to get related to each other; and there the

Cosmic Consciousness is not merely in its static aspect but also in its dynamic reality: it is the expression of something Above. When you become cosmic even though you speak of yourself as 'I' it is not the ego — that 'I-ness' disappears, and the mental, vital and the physical appear as representatives of that Consciousness. Ramakrishna speaks of that state as the form of ego left for action. When you reach the Supermind you become not only cosmic but something beyond the universe — transcendental, and there is indivisibility of unity and individuality. There, the cosmic and the individual all co-exist.

The same principle works out in science. The scientists at one time reduced all multiplicity of elements to Ether and described it in the most contradictory terms. Now they have found the electron as the basis of Matter. By the difference of position and number of electrons you get the whole multiplicity of objects. There also you find the One that is Many, and yet they are not two different things. Both the One and the Many are true and through both you have to go to the Truth.

When you come to politics, democracy, plutocracy, monarchy, etc., all have some truth — even Hitler and Mussolini stand for some truth.

Ours is a very big Yoga, one has to travail. I think X is not prepared to take all that trouble.

Disciple: Never, Sir! I have come here because I can't take so much trouble.

Sri Aurobindo: You are not called upon to do it. Even for me it would have been impossible if I had to do it all myself. At a certain stage the Heavens opened and the thing was done for me.

Disciple: My friend K asked Maharshi if attainment of immortality was possible. The Maharshi would not say anything by way of reply. But as K persisted, he said: "It is possible by Divine Grace."

Sri Aurobindo: That is hardly an answer. Everything is possible by Divine Grace. There are two things about immortality: one, the conquest of death. It does not however mean that one would never die. It means leaving the body at will. Second, it includes the power to change or renew the body. There is no sense in keeping the same body for years; that would be a terrible bondage. That is why death is necessary in order that one can take another body and have a fresh growth. You said Dasharath lived for sixty thousand years. I do not know what he did with such a long life — except that at the end he began producing children!

Have you read Shaw's *Back to Methuselah*? It shows how silly an intellectual can become. And what a ridiculous farce he has made of Joan of Arc! When he speaks of her visions they are projections of his own mental ideas and decisions. Shaw is all right when he speaks of England, Ireland and Society; but he can't do anything constructive. There he fails miserably. Intellectuals like Russell, when they talk of something beyond their scope cut such a poor figure: you can see what he writes about the "introvert". They cant tolerate emptiness or cessation of thought and breaking away from outside interests! If you ask them to stop their thoughts they refuse to accept it and at once come back from emptiness. And yet it is through emptiness one has to pass beyond.

JANUARY 1939

1 JANUARY 1939

Disciple: How can one succeed in meditation?

Sri Aurobindo: By quietude of the mind. Above the Mind there is not only the Infinite in itself but an infinite sea of peace, joy, light, power, etc. The golden lid — *hiraṇmaya pātra* — intervenes between that which is above Mind and what is below. Once one can break that lid those elements can come down at any time one wills, and for that, quietude is necessary. There are people who get those things without quietude, but it is very difficult.

Disciple: It is said that there is also a veil in the heart. Is it true?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, a veil or a wall, if you like. The vital with its surface consciousness, the emotional with its disturbances, are veils and one has to break through these and get to what is behind them. There, one finds the heart. In some people the Higher Force works behind the veil because it would meet with many obstacles if it worked in front; it builds or breaks whatever is necessary till one day the veil is rent and one finds oneself in the Infinite.

Disciple: Does the Higher Force work all the time, even when there is no aspiration in the individual?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. In those who have the inner urge, the intermittent action of aspiration itself may be due to the action of the Higher Force from behind.

Disciple: We want to know how to get the infinite peace etc.

Sri Aurobindo: First, to want only that. It is difficult, is it not? In that case you have to wait; Yoga demands patience. The old Yogas say that one has to wait twelve years to get any experience at all. Only after that period can one complain. But you said that you had many experiences, so, it is not so bad.

Disciple: Yes. I told you that meditation used to come to me at my place spontaneously, at any time, and I had to sit down to meditate. Sometimes, it used to come while I was just going to my office and the experience of peace etc. used to last for some days. But sometimes for a long period nothing happens. One should get some experience at least once in a fortnight.

Disciple: Sometimes I feel a pull on the head upwards. What is it due to?

Sri Aurobindo: Of course, it is not in the physical head but in the subtle body, the mind trying to ascend towards the Higher Consciousness.

Disciple: If one dreams or sees visions of seas, hills, etc., what do they mean?

Sri Aurobindo: These are symbols: the sea of energy, the hill of the Being with its different planes and parts — the Spirit at the summit. These visions are quite common; one sees them as the mind and the heart expand.

Disciple: I felt at one time that my head was at the Mother's feet. What is it, Sir?

Sri Aurobindo: It is the experience of the psychic being. So, you had the psychic experience.

Disciple: I told you how I had it and lost it through fear that I was dying. But I could not recognise this experience as psychic. **(***Laughter*)

Sri Aurobindo: It is this 'I' that comes in the way. One must forget it and experience as if it were happening to somebody else. If one could do that it would be a great conquest. When I had the Nirvana experience I forgot myself completely. I was a sort of nobody. What is the use of your being Mr. so and so, son of so and so? If your 'I' had died it would have been a glorious death.

Disciple: What happens when the human consciousness is

replaced by the Divine Consciousness?

Sri Aurobindo: One feels perpetual calm, perpetual strength — one is aware of Infinity, lives not only in Infinity but in Eternity. One feels the immortality and does not care about the death of the body, and one has the consciousness of the One in all. Everything becomes the manifestation of the Brahman. For instance, as I look round the room I see everything as the Brahman — it is not thinking, it is a concrete experience, even the wall, the book is Brahman. I see you not as X but as a divine being in the Divine. It is a wonderful experience.

2 JANUARY 1939

Dr. S the homeopath came. Mother came while he was talking about patients' faith and the price of homeopathic drugs. Then he said, "I think the Mother is testing me."

Mother: That is not the practice here. It is the play of the forces, or rather the play of adverse forces that tries to test the sadhak. If you refuse to listen to them or remain firm, they withdraw. People here have plenty of difficulties already, why add new ones? To say we purposely test them is not true. We never do it — never.

(*After some talk about the cost of homeopathic drugs, Dr. S took leave. Mother went away early at 6:45 but did not go down for the evening meditation before nearly 7:25 or 7:30.*)

Disciple: How far is it desirable for the Ashram to be self-sufficient?

Sri Aurobindo: Self-sufficient in what way?

Disciple: In meeting the needs of the daily life, for instance, preparing our own cloths here. My friend, who has come from Bombay, wants that we should introduce spindles and looms to

make our cloths. The question is whether and how far such self-sufficiency is desirable in an Ashram like ours.

Sri Aurobindo: It is not a question of how far it is desirable, it is also a question of how far it is practicable. No objection to spinning or weaving. How would N like to go on spinning?

Disciple: I am already spinning away.

Sri Aurobindo: There are all sorts of mental ideas, or rather mental formations which can be carried out and which are being carried out at the other places but this Ashram is not the fit place for carrying them out.

Disciple: In what way it is not fit?

Sri Aurobindo: There are many difficulties here.

You point to institutions like Dayalbagh. In that case you will have to direct all your energies in that channel leaving the Sadhana on one side.

In other organisations they impose discipline and obedience from outside, by rule or force. There, people are obliged to take their orders from someone. But here we don't impose such discipline and therefore you can hardly get people to work together. It is because of their ego and their idea of mental independence.

Even if you want to do the kind of work done by those organisations there are two things you must guard against: First, the tendency to degenerate into mere mechanical and commercial activity. Secondly, ambition: there is a natural tendency to cut a figure before the world, to hold that the Ashram and the Ashramites are something great — that must go. Lastly there is health — unless the doctor promises to homeopathise the sadhaks into health.

Work as part of Sadhana is all right, but work as part of spiritual creation we cannot take up unless the inner difficulties are

overcome. It is not that we don't want to do it, but a spiritual creation cannot be done according to mental constructions — it must be left entirely to the Mother's intuition. Even then there are difficulties!

Disciple: What is the difference between peace and silence?

Sri Aurobindo: What do you mean?

Disciple: Is peace included in silence or *vice versa*?

Sri Aurobindo: If you have silence you have peace, but the opposite may not be true, i.e., you may have peace but not silence.

Disciple: Is silence mere emptiness?

Sri Aurobindo: No, not necessarily. It may be full of the positive presence of the Divine.

Disciple: Is that not a dull and dry state?

Sri Aurobindo: No, not necessarily. As I said, it can be full of the presence of the Divine, or it may be mental peace accompanied by a sense of emptiness which may seem dull to the mind, but the emptiness is for something higher to come in and fill it.

Disciple: In that emptiness — *shunyam* — there is a great release, is it not?

Sri Aurobindo: Oh yes. It is a very pleasant state. People like Russell don't understand what this emptiness means. As soon as they try to go within they begin to feel empty and do not like it. They think that all that comes into the consciousness comes from outside. They have no idea that there are inner things with which the being can be filled.

Disciple: But you said in one of your letters to B that one must be prepared to pass through the period of dryness.

Sri Aurobindo: There is an experience of neutral peace of mind which may be dry and dull to the ordinary man.

Disciple: Can one act when one has the silence?

Sri Aurobindo: Certainly! Why not? When I talk of silence I mean inner silence. It is perfectly possible to hear and do all sorts of things and retain that inner silence.

Disciple: Is the silence static and dynamic both?

Sri Aurobindo: It is not silence that is dynamic — but you can become dynamic having that inner silence. You can also remain without doing anything. It depends. People who are dynamic can't remain without doing something. They do not realise that if they have the inner silence the effectivity of their outer work is increased a hundredfold.

A Maratha came to see me here and inquired what I was doing. When he heard that I was doing 'nothing', he said, "It is a great thing if one can do it. It is a great capacity to be able to do nothing!"

Disciple: There is one gentleman who actually sealed up his lips with something so that he may not be able to speak.

Sri Aurobindo: That is what is called Asuric tapasya.

Disciple: Can one gain something by it?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, all Tapasya can give you something. Physical and vital tapasya can also give you something. It can give you physical and vital control, though that is more a *nigraha* — repressed control — than anything else.

Disciple: Is it part of divine realisation? What is divine realisation?

Sri Aurobindo: The experience of peace and bliss is a spiritual realisation. If one gains control of the vital being by the influence of the Self, that is a divine realisation.

Disciple: But one can have the necessary control by the mind rather than try such physical and outward control.

Sri Aurobindo: These things may be steps to the Divine; for example Hatha Yoga and Raja Yoga.

Disciple: Our friend X finds that yogis have defects.

Sri Aurobindo: It is not the defects that are important but whatever leads to the upward growth, to the Divine, adding something to his stature, is a gain to the human progress towards the Light. No upward progress is to be despised.

3 JANUARY 1939

There was a hearty laugh over the thesis of a Marathi writer with socialistic tendencies who tried to prove that Swami Ramdas was a socialist!

Disciple: Some of our sadhaks seem to be too delicate: a small cut or even the smell of burning ghee upsets them. Sometimes other people who cannot understand this say this is mere feinting.

Sri Aurobindo: They used to brand the body with a hot iron to see if the man was in trance or not! They thought perhaps that it might be only deep trance and not Nirvikalpa Samadhi! (*Laughter*)

Disciple: Can it be that the man would not feel anything?

Sri Aurobindo: Even a deep trance is quite sufficient for this kind of unawareness. There are cases of people who, when under hypnotic influence, are unaffected by pins being stuck into their bodies. And also there are cases where a man is made to stretch out his arm and even two or three strong people cannot bend it.

Disciple: What is that capacity due to?

Sri Aurobindo: There are no physical causes. These phenomena are due to supraphysical causes and there the laws of the physical do not apply. There are also cases in which sugar tastes bitter under hypnotic influence. Now the question is whether sweetness or any other property is in the subject — as in the sense of beauty — or in

the object.

Disciple: But then what is sweetness due to in the case of sugar?

Sri Aurobindo: The question is whether experience of sweetness is a common reaction of all human beings, or has sugar anything in it corresponding to the experience of sweetness.

Disciple: But something of the property of the object persists, like the effect of medicine in homeopathic doses — the smallest quantity retains the quality.

Disciple: But what is your conclusion, Sir?

Sri Aurobindo: I don't know.

(*At this point the Mother came and the subject matter was reported to her.*)

Mother: I do not believe that the phenomena were due to hypnotism. In hypnotism you impose control on another man, that is to say, your will replaces his will.

But I know what I have seen. In most cases I have seen that both the hypnotiser and the hypnotised lend themselves unconsciously to the influence of occult forces. Anything that takes place in that condition is due to the influence of those forces. I know one case, an extraordinary case, of exteriorization in which almost down to the material — the vital and the vital-material — form of the subject was separated from his body. If the hypnotiser controls the man and if he has good will it may do the subject no harm. But in most cases he keeps himself aloof to direct the person and cannot take charge of the body and in the interval it is some other forces that take possession of the body. It is dangerous to do these things except under guidance or in the presence of somebody who knows these things.

You find people speaking languages in that unconscious condition which they do not know at all. It is because some of their being in the past, or subconsciously, knows the language and in

that state, a contact is established with that part of the subconscient and they speak that language. It is not as if the hypnotist willed that "the man shall speak a particular language" and the man begins to speak that language even though there may be no part in him that knew the language. Such a thing is impossible. Only if there is a part that knows, and if one can establish a contact with it, then one can speak that language.

(*Then Mother departed for the meditation*.)

Disciple: Is this knowledge indispensable for Yoga?

Sri Aurobindo: Not necessarily. It is useful for knowledge of the physical; also for mastery over death, it is essential.

There is an ancient prophecy in the Jewish Cabala that the kingdom of God would be established in humanity when the man will come who would have the power to die and come back, i.e., take up his body again after death. It is essential to know what is death if you want to conquer it. That shows that the ancients foresaw the need of the knowledge and also that of transformation of the physical.

It is curious how some people can easily separate their subtle bodies from the physical, say in three or four days even. They go out of the body and see their body lying in front of them, while there are others who do not succeed.

This knowledge is also useful in curing diseases. For instance, it is perfectly easy to prevent diseases and to cure them if you have the knowledge of these planes. There is what is called 'the nervous envelope', which is between the subtle and the gross body. It is that which acts as a sheath protecting you against all attacks of diseases. If the nervous envelope is intact no disease can come to you. In most people, with aging, this envelope wears out and then gradually the forces are able to penetrate and pierce it. That is one of the causes of death.

Disciple: Can this nervous envelope be seen in the patient?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, and if you can see what is necessary you can put it in. In order to keep it intact you must have quiet, a balanced life, rest, etc. People generally spoil it by excitement and other irregularities.

In the case of exteriorization done by the Tibetans, a thin thread is maintained when one leaves the body and if that is snapped the man may not be able to return to his body.

Disciple: There are cases of Tibetans who expose themselves to ice without any bad reactions and also there was the report of a messenger who practically flies throughout Tibet carrying the tidings of the Dalai Lama.

Sri Aurobindo: These are known phenomena.

Disciple: There are so many miracles reported about Sj. Bijoy Goswami. Do you think they are all true?

Sri **Aurobindo:** I have no personal knowledge of them. But I believe most of the miracles attributed to Bijoy Goswami are more possible with the subtle than with the physical body.

Sri Aurobindo then recounted the story of how Mother was once on the point of death in Algeria when she was practising occultism with Théon and his wife, both of them great occultists. Madame Théon particularly was a remarkable woman.

Sri Aurobindo: The Mother once exteriorised herself and visited her friends in Paris. The exteriorization was sufficiently material to enable her to write on a piece of paper with pencil.

The Tibetans are more familiar with occultism than with spirituality. The Europeans are more taken up with these occult things. They either believe everything or nothing. That explains their attraction for Tibet, Bhutan and other places with occult atmosphere. Nowadays stories and novels are being written with these themes. Japanese Zen Buddhism, and Chinese Taoism have

also attracted their attention.

I also wrote some stories but they are lost; the white ants have finished them and with them has perished my future fame as a story-teller. (*Laughter*)

But it is a pity that my translation of *Meghaduta* in terza rimas was lost. It was well done. Most of my stories were occult.

4 JANUARY 1939

X's face showed the usual expression which to the company present indicated the coming of a question.

Disciple: What is the effect of fasting?
Sri Aurobindo: On what?

Disciple: The effect of fasting on Yoga.

Sri Aurobindo: Oh, on Yoga? It gives a sort of excitement or an impetus to the vital being but the general effect does not seem to be sound or healthy.

I fasted twice: once in Alipore Jail for ten days and the other time in Pondicherry for twenty-three days. At Alipore I was in full yogic activities. I was not taking my food, and was throwing it away in the bucket. Of course, the Superintendent did not know it; only the warder knew about it and he informed others saying; "The gent;eman must be ill; he will not live long." Though my weight was diminishing I was able to raise a pail of water above my head which I could not do ordinarily.

At Pondicherry while fasting I was in full mental and vital vigour. I was even walking eight hours a day and not feeling tired at all, and when I broke the fast I did not begin slowly but with the usual normal food.

Disciple: How is it possible to have such energy without food?

Sri Aurobindo: One draws the energy from the vital plane instead of depending upon physical sustenance. Once in Calcutta I lived for a long time on rice and bananas only. It is a very good diet.

Disciple: The trouble is that one can't draw conclusions from your case.

Sri Aurobindo: At least one can draw the conclusion that it can be done! Once R. C. Dutt called me to dinner and was surprised to find that I was taking only vegetarian diet, while he could not live without meat. With the vegetarian diet I was feeling light and pure. It is only a belief that one can't do without meat; it is a question of habit.

Disciple: Can fasting be a cure for diseases also?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, if you know the process. The Europeans sometimes fast for that purpose, but in their case it is the mental idea that works. You start with the idea of being well or ill, and it happens accordingly.

Disciple: Can neurasthenia be thrown off like that?

Sri Aurobindo: In the case of neurasthenic and hysteric persons the nervous envelope is damaged.

Disciple: Then it is the question of the nervous sheath.

Sri Aurobindo: All the diseases come from outside. The force of the disease pierces what the Mother calls 'the nervous envelope' and then enters the physical body. If one is conscious of the nervous envelope — the subtle nervous sheath — then the disease can be thrown away before it enters the physical body, as one throws away the thoughts before they enter the mind.

Disciple: X told us once that she used to have a headache which was just above the head and it was very severe. We laughed at it because we could not believe that a headache could be above the head.

Sri Aurobindo: How do you know there can't be such a headache? If the consciousness can be lifted above the head and remain there why not the headache?

The body is a mere mass of responsive vibrations; everything comes from outside and finds a response in the body.

Disciple: If everything comes from outside then what are we? What belongs to us?

Sri Aurobindo: In one sense nothing belongs to you. The physical is made up, one can say, of various predispositions, energies due to heredity, your past lives, i.e., sum of energies of the past, and what you have acquired in this life. These are there ready to act under favourable conditions, under the pressure of Nature. It is Universal Nature that gives the sense of 'I' or "I am doing everything." This 'I' and 'mine' have no meaning except in the ordinary sense.

Disciple: The other day I could not understand what you said about fundamental personality. What is the truth behind personality?

Sri Aurobindo: There are two things: Personality and the Person, which are not the same. The true Person is the eternal Divine Purusha assuming many personalities and it is thrown in Time as the Cosmic and the Individual for a particular purpose, use or work. This true Person is all the time conscious of its identity with the Cosmic. That is why liberation is possible.

Disciple: Is cosmic liberation static or dynamic?

Sri Aurobindo: It is either, or both. In the static aspect one realises the pure Self as the Infinite, One, without movement, action or duality.

In the dynamic liberation, it depends upon where and how you experience the Unity. If it is in the mind, you feel your mind as one with the Cosmic Mind; in that case your own mind does not exist. If

you feel the Unity in the vital, then your vital being becomes a part of the Cosmic Vital, one with Cosmic Life. You can experience the Unity on the physical plane; then you feel your body as a speck of Universal Matter. Or, the identity can be above the mind, by breaking open the lid that divides the Mind from the Infinite. Just as there is a wall that separates the psychic being from the outer nature, so also there is a wall above the head. You break that wall, or what is called the lid, and you feel yourself as the Infinite, and your individual self in the Infinite. That opening can be either vertical or horizontal. This realization makes dynamic liberation possible — not merely a liberation of Laya.

Disciple: Is it true that illness comes from Sadhana?

Sri Aurobindo: From Sadhana? Not necessarily.

Disciple: I think he means that illness may come in the course of Sadhana for purification.

Sri Aurobindo: That is a different thing. It can be a circumstance in the sadhana.

Disciple: When I was a newcomer here and used to have physical troubles, people said it was due to Sadhana and so I used to hide it from you lest you should stop the use of your Force.

Disciple: Some Sufis and Bhaktas take illness and other troubles as gifts from the Beloved, the Divine. So, can one say that everything comes from the Divine?

Sri Aurobindo: They are right in a way. They take everything as coming from the Divine and it is a very good attitude if one can truly take it. Whatever happens is with the sanction of the Supreme. If you neglect the chain of intermediate causes there is a Superior Cause to everything.

Disciple: If a thing happens due to our negligence, can we say that it happened by the Divine's sanction?

Sri Aurobindo: I said, "neglecting the intermediate causes".

Disciple: Would there not be some danger in that attitude? We may shirk our responsibilities and lay it on the Divine.

Sri Aurobindo: I said that about the Bhakta, not about everybody. For the Bhakta what happens is the best and he takes it in that light.

For the Yogi who has to conquer these things they will come, otherwise there would be nothing to overcome. It would be no real conquest at all. One can always feel the difficulties as opportunities, and in one sense one can say that whatever happens is for the best. Hostile forces are recognised as hostile, but from another standpoint they become the Divine power throwing out attacks for the work to be done. Ultimately all powers are from the Divine, they assist in the work. They throw up difficulties to test the strength. It is the Divine that has created the opposition and it is the Divine who sends you the defeat so that you may conquer the difficulties hereafter. This is necessary also to counter the egos sense of responsibility.

At one time I experienced the hostile forces as the gods trying to test my strength. You have to act not for success but for the sake of the Divine, though it does not mean that you must not work for success. Arjuna complains to Sri Krishna in the Gita that he speaks in "double words" saying: "Do not be eager for the result" and at the same time "Fight and conquer."

Disciple: There was a letter from our friend X in which he has tried to show that the Gita is a book on psychoanalysis and that Sri Krishna was a great psychoanalyst! He psychoanalysed Arjuna and worked out his complexes. He was very much perturbed at your denunciation of Freud's psychoanalysis in the *Bases of Yoga*. You have run down the greatest discovery of modern times.

Sri Aurobindo: Psychoanalysis means that the subconscient is there in man and it influences the consciousness. It means to say that if you suppress anything it goes down into your being and

comes up in queer and abnormal forms.

Disciple: What, according to them, is this subconscient?

Sri Aurobindo: They say it is inconscient. Then how does it throw up everything and raise symbols in your consciousness? Modern psychology is only surface deep. Really speaking a new basis is needed for psychology. The only two important requisites for real knowledge of psychology are: Going inwards, and identification. And those two are not possible without Yoga.

5 JANUARY 1939

Dr R came. There was the usual discussion about removal of the splints on Sri Aurobindo's leg, growth of the bone, etc. After he left Mother said she had seen cases where even at the age of 33 the skull had not completely ossified, adding "In such cases the brain goes on developing." After she left, X mentioned the arrest of a young politician which set the ball rolling.

Disciple: What was your age when you entered politics openly?

Sri Aurobindo: About thirty-three years.

Disciple: When did you begin yoga?

Sri Aurobindo: Sometime in 1905.

Disciple: How did you begin? Was it with the Nirvana experience at Baroda?

Sri Aurobindo: God knows how! It began very early perhaps. When I landed in Bombay a great calm and quiet descended upon me. Then there was the experience of the Self, the Purusha. Later there were other characteristic experiences — at Poona on the Parvati hills, and in Kashmir on the Shankaracharya hill — a sense of a great infinite Reality was felt. It was very real.

At Baroda, Deshpande tried to convert me to yoga, but I had the usual ideas about it — that one has to go to the forest and give up everything. But I was interested in the freedom of the country. I had always thought that the great men of the world could not have been after a chimera and if there was such a Power why not use it for the freedom of the country?

Barin used to experiment with planchette and table-rapping. Once he called our father who made some remarkable prophecies. When asked to give proof of his identity he mentioned his having given a gold watch to Barin — none in the company knew about it. Then he spoke of a picture on the wall of the house of Devdhar, who was present. They tried to check up but found no picture there. The spirit when told about it, asked us to look again. When Devdhar asked his mother, she said that there was an old picture which had been plastered over. At another seance Tilak was present. When questioned about Tilak, the spirit said, "He will be the man who will remain with head unbent when your work will be on trial and others will bow down." Then once we called Ramakrishna. He did not say anything. Only at the end he said, *mandir gadho* — build a temple, which we interpreted as starting a temple for political sannyasis, but which later I interpreted correctly as "Make a temple in yourself."

I began Pranayama around 1905. Devdhar was a disciple of Brahmananda and I took instructions from him. I practised it in Khaserao Jadhav's house in Baroda. The results were remarkable: I used to see some visions — luminous patterns, figures, etc. Secondly, I felt a sort of electric power round my head. Thirdly, I began to have a very rapid flow of poetry. My powers of writing poetry were nearly dried up, but after the practice of Pranayama, they revived with great vigour and I could write both prose and poetry with a tremendous speed. That flow has never ceased since then. If I have not written much afterwards it is because I had something else to do. But the moment I want to write, it is there.

Fourthly, my health improved — I grew stout and strong and the skin became smooth and fair and there was a flow of sweetness in the saliva. I used to feel a certain aura round the head. There were plenty of mosquitoes there but they did not come to me. I used to sit more and more in Pranayama but there were no more results.

It was at that time that I gave up meat diet and found a great feeling of lightness and purification in the system. Meat is a rajasic food. That is why the Kshatriyas did not give it up. Vivekananda recommended it to Indians because it gives a certain force and energy in the physical. From Tamas you pass into Rajas, Vivekananda was not quite wrong.

There came a Naga Sannyasi who gave me a Stotra of Kali, — a very violent Stotra ending with *jahi, jahi* — kill, kill — for securing India's freedom. I used to repeat it but it did not give any results.

Once I visited Ganganath [*at Chandod*] after Brahmananda's death when Keshwananda was there [*in charge*].

With my Europeanised mind I had no faith in image worship and I hardly believed in the presence of God. I went to Karnali [*near Chandod*] where there are many temples. There is one of Kali, and when I looked at the image I saw the living Presence there. For the first time I believed in the presence of God.

At one time, in Sadhana, I used to try all sorts of experiments to see what happens and how far they are related to the truth. I took Bhang, Ganja, hemp, and other intoxicants as I wanted to know what happens and why sannyasis and sadhus take these things. It made me go into trance, and sometimes sent me to a superior plane of consciousness. [*But reliance on these outer stimulants was found to be the greatest drawback of this method.*]

I met Lele when I was searching for some guidance and practised meditation under his guidance. I had the Nirvana experience in Sardar Majumdar's house in the room on the top floor. After that I had to rely on inner guidance for my Sadhana. In

Alipore the Sadhana was very fast, it was extravagant and exhilarating. On the vital plane it can be dangerous and disastrous. I took to fasting at Alipore for ten or eleven days and lost ten pounds in weight. At Pondicherry the loss of weight was not so much, though the physical substance began to be reduced. It was in Shankar Chetty's house. I was walking eight hours a day during a twenty-three days' fast.

The miraculous or extraordinary powers acquired by Yogis on the vital plane are not all true in the physical. There are many pitfalls in the Vital. The vital powers take up even a man like Hitler and make him do things by suggesting to him — "It shall happen." There are quite a number of cases of sadhaks here who have lost their Sadhana by listening to these voices from the vital world. And the humour of it all is that they all say that they come either from the Mother or from me!

6 JANUARY 1939

Disciple: What are the methods in Sadhana for removal of the ego?

Sri Aurobindo: There are two methods of effacement of the ego: By realisation of the Spirit above and of its nature of purity, knowledge etc. And secondly, by humility in the heart.

Disciple: What is the difference?

Sri Aurobindo: The second method does not remove the ego but makes it harmless; it would therefore help one spiritually. Complete removal of the ego takes place when one identifies oneself with the Spirit and realises the same Spirit in all. Also when the mental, vital and physical nature is known to be derived from the universal mind, universal vital and the universal physical, then the same

result ensues. The individual must realise his divinity i.e. his identity with the Transcendent or the Cosmic Divine.

Generally, when one realises the Spirit, it is the mental sense of the ego that goes, not the entire ego-sense. The dynamic nature retains the ego, especially the vital ego. So, the best thing would be to combine the two — for the psychic attitude of humility helps in getting rid of the vital ego.

The complete dissolution of the ego is not an easy thing. Specially important is the removal of mental and vital ego; the ego of the physical and of the subconscient can be dealt with at leisure, that is to say, they are not so absorbing.

As I said, humility helps in the removal of the vital ego, but one must remember that it is not outward humility. There are many people who profess and show the utmost outward humility, but in their hearts think "I am the man!"

Disciple: Desai, when he came here for a short stay, found that you lacked the virtue of humility or modesty.

Sri Aurobindo: How does he know? Perhaps I did not profess like some other people that I was nothing. I could not do that because I know I am not nothing.

Disciple: Were you modest when you had not taken to Yoga?

Sri Aurobindo: There was a sort of voluntary self-effacement, I liked to keep myself in the background. But I can't say that I was more modest within than most people.

Disciple: Mahatmaji, when he finds somebody in disagreement with him on principle, says: "He is superior to me, he is my elder, but I differ from him."

Sri Aurobindo: But does he really consider the other superior, that is the question. When I differed from someone I simply said "No," or "I don't agree," and kept to my view. My answer to Suren Banerji when he invited our party to unite with his group in order

to jointly fight the dominant right wing of the Moderates at the U.P. Convention, was "No," and I kept stiff. For it would have necessitated our being appointed as delegates by his party and accepting the constitution imposed at Surat. I spoke at most twenty or thirty words and the whole thing failed. Perhaps one would not call me modest.

At the Hoogly Provincial Conference we Nationalists had the majority. There was a great row and confusion in the open session and Ashwini Dutt used to jump up and say, "This is life!" But in order to keep unity I asked the Nationalists not to oppose the Moderate resolution and leave the hall quietly so that they would not have to vote. The Moderate leaders were very angry that people did not any more follow their tried and veteran leaders but so completely obeyed the young leaders. Suren Banerji could not realise the difference between old, upper middle class leadership due to their influence and money and the new leadership of those who stood for a principle and commanded a following.

It was at that time that people began to get the sense of discipline and of obeying the leaders orders. They were violent, but at the word of the command they used to obey. That paved the way for Gandhi.

Suren Banerji had a personal magnetism and he was sweet-spoken; he could get round anybody. His idea was to become the undisputed leader of Bengal by using the Nationalists for the sword and the Moderates for the public face. In private he would go up to and accept the revolutionary movement. He even wanted to set up a provincial board of control of the revolutionaries! Barin once took a bomb to him and he was full of enthusiasm. He even had a letter from Suren Banerji, when he was arrested at Maniktolla Garden. But in the court they hushed up the matter as soon as Norton pronounced S. N. Banerji.

Disciple: Aundh State has given a very fine constitution to the people. It has conferred wide powers on the Panchayats. Such

constructive work among the villagers would prevent communism. They are thinking of introducing co-operative farming.

Sri Aurobindo: Co-operative farming is an excellent thing; it would develop agriculture. But dictatorship of the proletariat is a different thing. It may have a very fine constitution on paper, but it is quite different in practice. In such a system all men are made to think alike.

Religion is a different affair, it is voluntary; but the country is quite different from the church. You can't choose your country. If you make all people think alike there can't be any human progress. If you were to differ from Stalin you would be liquidated.

These dictators have remarkably few ideas. Take for example Hitler. He believes that the Germans are the best people in the world, Hitler should be the leader, all the Jews are wicked persons, all the people in the world must be Nazis. I do not understand how humanity can progress under such conditions.

Disciple: The tendency of all governments is to increase taxes.

Sri Aurobindo: All governments are robbing, some with legislation, some without. You can well imagine the condition in which you have to give 50% of your income as taxes and have to manage with the rest as best you can.

Disciple: The Customs also charge too heavily.

Sri Aurobindo: It is another form of robbery and yet, in spite of it all, I don't understand how France produces only 250 aeroplanes as compared to a 1000 of Germany! I don't know what these goverments do with the huge sums they get. There is a sufficiently honest administration in England. The public are uneasy about the war.

Disciple: Even some of the princes have been caught smuggling.

Sri Aurobindo: Smuggling there seems almost a virtue, because it is robbing a robber. (*Laughter*) You must have heard that the

Maharajah of Darbhanga had to pay Rs. 50,000 as duty on the necklace of Marie Antoinette which he had bought for one lakh.

Disciple: There is now a movement in C.P. for separating the Marathi-speaking from the Hindi-speaking region. It has weakened the Congress.

Sri Aurobindo: Nagpur was a very good centre of the Nationalists. The two regions should have been separated to begin with.

7 JANUARY 1939

Disciple: Can the ego be removed by the psychic attitude and by the realisation of Self?

Sri Aurobindo: Psychic humility takes away the egoism but not the ego; removing of the ego of the natural individuality is not the work of the psychic. The psychic depends upon and maintains the natural individuality. The psychic is there so that the natural individuality would turn to and progress towards the Divine.

Disciple: How is the ego removed?

Sri Aurobindo: Ego is removed by the realisation of the Spirit, that is, by attaining to the spiritual consciousness Above, which is independent of Nature, which is self-existent. That Spirit is One in all. Realisation of that removes the ego, because then one identifies oneself with the Spirit.

Disciple: What then replaces the 'I' in the divine individual? What is the nature of the psychic individuality?

Sri Aurobindo: In the case of psychic individuality the man may feel the ego of the Sadhu, the Saint, the Bhakta, or the virtuous man. He may also get rid of egoism by imposing on his nature the One

Spirit and a feeling of sympathy for all humanity. But that is not the same as getting rid entirely of the ego. The psychic clears the way for the removal of the ego.

Disciple: What happens when one realises the Spirit?

Sri Aurobindo: Generally, when one realises the Spirit, it is the mental sense of the ego that is abolished, but the vital and the physical still retain their egoistic movements. That is what most Yogis mean when they say "It is nature." They mostly allow it to run its course and when the body drops, it also drops; but it is not transformation. That is what Vivekananda meant when he said that human nature cannot be changed; it is like a dogs tail: you can straighten it if you like, but as soon as you leave it, it is curved again.

Disciple: What is really meant by this "nature"?

Sri Aurobindo: It means that the subconscious has in it certain gathered powers which impose themselves on the human being.

Disciple: How to transform or change this human nature?

Sri Aurobindo: In order to change human nature you have to work from level to level. You reject a thing from the mind, it comes to the vital. When you reject it from the vital, then it comes to the physical and then you find it in the subconscient.

There is a central point in the subconscient that has to be changed. If that is done, then everything is done. It is from there that resistance rises from Nature — that is what Vivekananda meant. To effect complete transformation you have to bring down everything to the subconscient, and it is very difficult.

Disciple: How can one replenish the exhausted nervous being? Can it be done by drawing energy from the Universal Vital or by the help of the Higher Power?

Sri Aurobindo: Both ways can be combined. One can draw from the Universal Vital and the Higher Power can also work. But there

should be no Tamas, inertia, and other excuses.

Disciple: Was there a time when these things were experienced?

Sri Aurobindo: When we were living in the Library House, we passed through a brilliant period of Sadhana in the Vital. Many people had dazzling experiences and great currents of energy were going round. If we had stopped there — like other Yogas do — we would have given rise to a brilliant creation, or, would have established some kind of religion; but that would not have been the real work.

Disciple: Could a great progress in the conquest of the physical being have been made at that time?

Sri Aurobindo: If the Sadhaks had taken the right attitude, then with the gain in the vital it would have been made in the physical, in spite of difficulties. But that was not done. Then we came down to the physical. Those brilliant experiences disappeared and the slow difficult work of physical transformation remained. There, in the physical, you find the truth of the Vedic Rik— censurers are always ready, telling, "You can't do the thing, you are bound to fail."

Disciple: Would it then mean that the new people who would come to this Yoga would have no experience of the mental and the vital planes?

Sri Aurobindo: They can have, if they hold aloof. Only, they cant help the pressure on the physical nature as it is in the atmosphere.

There are cases that differ: there is someone who made very good progress in the mind. In another case the sadhak became aloof and progressed; but the moment he came to the vital, the whole thing seemed to have stopped.

Disciple: Did he lose the contact with the Brahmic consciousness entirely?

Sri Aurobindo: No, it is only apparently lost. But if he cannot go further, then his yoga stops there, that is all.

Disciple: Can the newcomers make rapid progress?

Sri Aurobindo: Certainly they can. I know cases where they go on very well making good progress.

Disciple: Will the Yoga be more easy for the lucky newcomers?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, in a sense; but the conditions may be more exacting, and the demands made on them may be high. You had an easy time. You were left to do more or less as you liked in your mind, and the vital and other parts. But when the change in the subconscious has to come about, many will find it difficult; there will be some who will progress and others who will not and will drop out. Already some have dropped out, as X did, when the Mother took a decision about his vital being "You will have to change." Before that he was swimming in his art and other things, but as soon as this came he dropped out. All these things — attachments, sex-impulse, etc. — finally find refuge in the subconscient. One has to throw it out from there — destruction of the seed in the subconscient is necessary, otherwise it would sprout again, as we see in the case of some yogis.

Disciple: Can one have these things in him when there is complete union with the Divine?

Sri Aurobindo: What is this "complete union"? For instance, Ramakrishna asked the Divine Mother not to send him Kama and he succeeded, but all cases are not like that. It is quite possible to reject something centrally and totally, but one can't make a general rule about these things.

Our Yoga is like a new path made out in the jungle and there is no previous road in the region. I had myself great difficulties; the suggestion that it was not possible was always there. A vision which the Mother had has sustained me: the vision of a carriage moving towards the highest peak on a steep hill. The highest

summit is the transformation of Nature by the attainment of the Higher Consciousness.

Disciple: Is there nothing that can be taken as established uniformly in all the Yogas?

Sri Aurobindo: In this Yoga you have to go on working out again and again the same thing. Thus it becomes a long drawn out struggle, one falls and rises, again falls. Take, for instance, Nirvana, quietude and Samata. I had to go on establishing them again and again till I had done it in the subconscient, and then this accident came. It can be a test.

Disciple: What made the attack possible?

Sri Aurobindo: There were gaps in the physical.

Disciple: Can one take this as a part of the Lila?

Sri Aurobindo: Well, it is the ignorance and the Divine is working out from there. If that was not so, what is the meaning of life?

Everything looked all right and it appeared as if I was going on well with the work, then the accident came. It indicated that it is when the Subconscient is changed that the power of Truth can be embodied; then it can be spread in wave after wave in humanity.

8 JANUARY 1939

Disciple: Can one say that snoring is the protest of the subconscient against somebody's presence? (*Laughter*)

Sri Aurobindo: Against whom? Against whose presence when one snores alone! (*Laughter*)

Disciple: We read in the papers about the conversion of John Middleton Murry to theism. It was Hitler's statement after the

purge that he "embodies Justice and Law", that he dispenses with "trials", which made Murry consider him as the Anti-Christ. It seems Gandhian non-violence has also appealed to Hitler. He wants to become a village pastor and stop the flow of villagers to the cities. Gandhi has written about Hitler's regime that the sufferings of Bishop Niemoller are not in vain. He has covered himself with glory. Hitler's heart may be harder than stone, but non-violence has power to generate heat that can melt the stoniest heart. What do you think of that?

Sri Aurobindo: I am afraid, it would require quite a furnace! (*Laughter*) Gandhi has mainly to deal with Englishmen and the English want to have their conscience at ease. Besides, the Englishman wants to satisfy his self-esteem and wants world-esteem. But if Gandhi had to deal with the Russian Nihilists — not the Bolsheviks — or the German Nazis then they would have long ago put him out of their way.

Disciple: Gandhi is hopeful about the conversion of Hitler's heart or about the German people throwing him over.

Sri Aurobindo: Hitler would not have been where he is if he had a soft heart. It is curious how some of the most sentimental people are most cruel. Hitler, for instance, is quite sentimental. He weeps over his mother's tomb and paints sentimental pictures.

Disciple: It is "the London cabman's psychic", as you said the other day.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. Men like Hitler can't change, they have to be bumped out of existence. There is no chance of their changing in this life. He can't get rid of his cruelty — it is in his blood.

Not that the British can't be brutal and sentimental too. But they can't persist as the Germans and Russians in their brutality. The Englishman may be sentimental, but he likes to show off that he is practical, prosaic and brave. In the Russian, you find a mixture of cruelty and sentimentalism. He can break your neck and the next

moment embrace you. The Englishman behaves quite well if you give him blows on his face when he treats you badly.

Disciple: In the Fiji Islands there was the case of a Punjabi from a good family, who went there as an indentured labourer. An Englishman was his supervisor and used to beat him every day, in spite of his doing the hard allotted work. Once he got fed up and caught hold of him, threw him on the ground and went on giving blows. Then the Englishman said, "That will do!" He got up and shook hands with him and the two became great friends! (*Laughter*)

Sri Aurobindo: There was the case of Shyamakanta, the tiger-tamer. Once in a railway compartment he was travelling there were a Bengali couple and some Tommies. The soldiers began to pester the Bengali's wife and he was so afraid that he didn't know what to do. Shyamakanta got up, caught hold of the soldiers and began to knock their heads against each other so hard that they were glad to get out at the next station. They did not expect a Bengali to be so strong. Once at Howrah station a Bengali was being bullied by an Englishman. Suddenly he shouted "Bande Mataram" and everyone in the train began to shout and the Englishman took alarm. That was the sudden transformation during the Swadeshi days. Before that our people used to tremble before an Englishman. The position was even reversed.

Before the Swadeshi movement, I wanted to do political work in Bengal and toured the districts of Jessore, Khulna, etc. with Debabrata Bose; we lived simply on plantains. We found the people steeped in pessimism, a black weight of darkness weighed over the country. It is difficult nowadays to imagine those days. Only a few of us stood for independence. Debabrata had a very persuasive way of talking but we had great difficulty in convincing people. At Khulna, we had a right royal reception, not so much because I was a politician, but because I was a son of my father. They served us with seven rows of dishes and I could hardly reach out to them, and even from others I could eat very little.

My father was very popular at Khulna; wherever he went he became all powerful. When he was at Rangpur he was very friendly with the magistrate there. (We went to his cousins place in England afterwards, the Drewetts.) It was always the doctor who got things done at Rangpur. When the new magistrate came he found that nothing could be done without Dr. K. D. Ghose. So he asked the Government to remove him and he was transferred to Khulna. It was since that time that he became a politician. That is to say, he did not like the English domination. Before that everything Western was good! He wanted, for example, all his sons to be great; at that time to join the I.C.S. was to become great. He was extremely generous. Hardly anyone who went to him for help came back empty-handed.

Disciple: Did you see him after coming from England?

Sri Aurobindo: I could not. In a way, I was the cause of his death. He was having heart-trouble and the Grindlays sent a wire to him that I had started by a certain steamer; in fact I had not. That steamer had sunk near Portugal and so when he heard the news he thought that I was drowned and he died of that shock.

Disciple: When you were in England, was he sending you money regularly?

Sri Aurobindo: In the beginning. But afterwards he sent less and less and ultimately he stopped altogether. I had my scholarship at Cambridge but that was not enough to cover the fees and other expenses. So once the tutor wrote to him about money. Then he sent the exact sum for the fees and wrote a letter lecturing me about extravagance! (*Laughter*)

But it was not true. I and my eldest brother, at any rate, were living quite a Spartan life. My brother worked with Henry Cotton's brother, James Cotton, who was secretary of the South Kensington Liberal Club, and got 5 shillings a week. On that we two managed to live. During a whole year a slice or two of sandwich bread and

butter, and a cup of tea in the morning and in the evening a penny saveloy formed the only food. For winter we had no overcoat. To talk of extravagance was absurd. But Manmohan could not stand it, so he went to a boarding house and ate nicely without paying anything.

There was a tailor at Cambridge who used to tempt me with all sorts of clothes for suits and make me buy them; of course, he gave credit. Then I went to London. He somehow traced me there and found Manmohan and canvassed orders from him. Manmohan went in for a velvet suit, not staring red but aesthetic, and used to visit Oscar Wilde in that suit. After we came away to India, the tailor was not to be deprived of his dues! He wrote to the Government of Bengal and to the Baroda State for recovering the sum from me and Manmohan. I had paid up all my dues and kept £ 4/- or so. I did not believe that I was bound to pay it, since he always charged me double. But as the Maharaja said I had better pay it, I paid.

Disciple: Did Manmohan follow your political career?

Sri Aurobindo: He was very proud of our political career. He used to say: "There are two and a half men in India — my brothers Aurobindo and Barin, two, and half is Tilak!" (*Laughter*)

Disciple: How was Manmohan in England?

Sri Aurobindo: He used to play the poet: he had poetical illness and used to moan out his verses in deep tones. Once we were passing through Cumberland and it was getting dark. We shouted to him but he paid no heed, and came afterwards leisurely at his own pace. His poet-playing dropped after he came to India.

Disciple: How was the eldest brother?

Sri Aurobindo: He was not at all poetic or imaginative. He took after my father. He was very practical but very easy to get on with. But he had fits of miserliness.

The question Barin asked me when he came to Baroda and stayed for sometime was: "How can you stay with Madhav Rao for months and years without quarrelling?"

12 JANUARY 1939

There was a controversy about a girl of about ten or twelve who had an intense aspiration to stay in the Ashram, — to be under Mother's personal protection and guidance. But being under the guardianship of her parents she could not carry out her inner wish. Her parents had taken her away.

Sri Aurobindo: She has developed character and intelligence quite beyond her age. When she wrote to us she sometimes made observations on the world and on people that were even beyond a grown-up woman. She is remarkable for her age. Her parents have found it difficult to bend her to their will. It is true her mother does not love her. It is an accident that she was born in that family: she is quite unlike her parents. Besides, she has found out that her mother used to manage her by lying.

Disciple: They say that the child is quite happy where she is.

Sri Aurobindo: But she wrote to us that she is very unhappy outside!

Disciple: In the papers we find that Stalin has made allegations against Trotsky; can there be any truth in them?

Sri Aurobindo: Not creditable.

Disciple: But the confessions of the generals were dramatic.

Sri Aurobindo: That they made to save their relatives.

Disciple: A Japanese general predicts a hundred-year war to civilize the world!

Sri Aurobindo: The idea is first to drive out the Europeans from Asia, but the Japanese will go about it silently without bragging.

Disciple: Will Indian freedom come a long time after?

Sri Aurobindo: Not necessarily; it will not come by arms but without arms.

Disciple: How?

Sri Aurobindo: There is a prophecy among the Sannyasis, and also Lele used to tell us, that there is no chance of freedom by fighting.

Disciple: Italy or Japan can come to help India.

Sri Aurobindo: That is not so easy. Naval equipment is not enough; without a strong army it is very difficult to conquer India.

Disciple: Congress ministers are trying to introduce military training in U.P., C.P., and Bombay. But Sir Sikandar Hayat in the Punjab is counting on the distinction between martial and non-martial races.

Sri Aurobindo: That was introduced by the British to keep down India by depriving her of military races except the Pathans, Gurkhas, Punjabis, etc. But every part of India had its empire in the past. The whole of India can have military equipment and training in a short time.

Disciple: But what about the Muslims?

Sri Aurobindo: They also want independence. Only they want 'Mohammedan independence'.

Disciple: Spain in Europe seems to be like India. But if Franco gets Spain it would be bad for England.

Sri Aurobindo: It will be worse for France. By spring the intentions of the Axis powers will be known.

Disciple: But why does France depend so much upon England?

Sri Aurobindo: Because she has no other ally.

Disciple: It is the short-sighted policy of the Allies that has given a chance to Hitler.

Sri Aurobindo: No, it is England that got afraid of the French ascendency on the continent and encouraged and pushed Germany into power. She wanted to maintain the balance of power. Hitler aims at France.

France always wanted to placate Italy; but England came in the way with sanctions against Italy. But she could not save Abyssinia and made an enemy of Mussolini.

Disciple: Italy's cry for Tunis was to divert the attention from the Spanish situation.

Sri Aurobindo: b don't think Blum's socialist Government is for intervention in Spain. Socialists in France did nothing when they were in power.

Disciple: Perhaps Russia can render some help.

Sri Aurobindo: Russia is too far and I don't know if it is trustworthy.

Disciple: But the newspapers report that America is preparing armaments.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, perhaps Roosevelt has secret news about the intentions of the Nazis. It is not a question of meddling in European politics, but of being eaten last! (*Laughter*) There are at least some people in America who understand this thing.

14 JANUARY 1939

Sri Aurobindo opened the topic by referring to a letter from an American.

Sri Aurobindo: There is a job which perhaps X would like to attend to. The letter is addressed to "Aurobindo Ashram" under the belief that it is a person. The man wants predictions on sporting items. He says: "As you are a Yogi you can go into trance and we will share the profits! Let me know your terms. If you don't want to take the money, you can give it to the poor!" (*turning to X*) You can go into trance or send Y into it. I will be a hard nut.

I have no objection to sharing profits — only, we share the profit not the loss! Besides, we class ourselves among the poor, so we wont have to look for them!

All sorts of half-crazy people are writing to us from everywhere, from Germany, America, etc. I wonder how they manage to get the address.

Disciple: It must be from the magazine in which A wrote an article giving his Ashram address from which this man thought "Aurobindo Ashram" was a man! In that case, A must take up the matter and reply to this man.

Disciple: I am afraid, we won't get anything in spite of the proposal to share profits. In Gujarat there was — I believe even now there is — a group of seekers under the guidance of late Narsimhacharya who got an offer from America promising fabulous returns from small investments. The followers were all taken in, lakhs of rupees were sent and nothing was heard afterwards.

Disciple: On the other hand some Indian Sannyasis are making good business in America. One of them has modernised yoga; his method is a combination of business and yoga, "sets of lectures and courses on meditation" etc.

Sri Aurobindo: R was telling M that if M went to America he would be a great success. I think R was right. Some of these people have the character of a charlatan.

Disciple: But coming to the question: Is it possible to predict

sport items and cotton prices and share-fluctuations?

Disciple: I knew an astrologer who impressed my cousin very much, but when he acted under his guidance his predictions did not at all come true.

Sri Aurobindo: But I had a remarkable experience at Baroda, not of an astrologer but of one who knew thought-reading, though his predictions as an astrologer were all wrong. The manager of my house, Chhotalal, took me to this man and asked me to have some questions in my mind.

As we entered his room he told me all the four questions that were in my mind; and the curious thing is that three questions were clearly formulated in my mind, but the fourth one had escaped me; but he caught that also. It was remarkable.

Disciple: Is anything being done to get some of your books published in America?

Sri Aurobindo: No. Besides, I don't know if the Americans are interested in profound questions. Swami Nikhilananda, I heard, wrote an article about me which Nishtha [*Miss Wilson*] says, was profound. The editor of the paper returned it saying, "It won't interest the Americans," and he had to change it and make it what it is.

Disciple: But the Americans are open to new ideas.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. If they would not want sensation and change, the openness to new ideas would be a very great advantage. As it is, all one can say is that there are more people in America interested in these things than in Europe, though in Europe also the number of people who are interested in them is increasing nowadays.

Disciple: One Thompson, a graduate from Oxford, has come to the Ashram. I had some humorous exchange with him. He was very funny.

Sri Aurobindo: It must be he who recently sent me a long letter on philosophy. I don't think he himself was clear about what he wrote. What was your exchange with him like?

Disciple: I was just going out when the sadhak at gate-duty asked me to help him to understand this new arrival. I asked Thompson, "May I know your name, please?" He: "Name! I have no name." "Apart from philosophical considerations about the reality or unreality of it, a name is a necessity in this unphilosophical world," I said. He: "You can call me anything you like — it matters very little to me." I: "It is not a question of my calling you anything. Unfortunately there is the Police Department which will demand a passport with a name, and that matters."

Sri Aurobindo: Then what did he say?

Disciple: Finally he said his name was Thompson. (*Laughter*)

Disciple: I remember a difficult question: Is it in keeping with Yoga to get oneself insured?

Sri Aurobindo: Thakur Dayananda [*of Bengal*] would say "No." He was always depending on God and did not believe in storing things. If you don't get anything, it means God wants you to starve. The whole group used to sing and dance, there was an excited expression of their devotion, some kind of vital demonstration. Later on he complained that the disciples were drawing out his vital forces and turned towards Knowledge.

They had the faith that nothing could happen to them. Once when the police came to arrest them they were all singing and dancing. Seeing them in exaltation the police went away. They thought that they were invincible. The Government sent soldiers who arrested them. Then their faith was shaken. One of the prominent disciples, Mahindra Dey, also lost his faith, though he was the victim of his own enthusiasm.

Disciple: How can ones vital forces be drawn out when one is in contact with the Divine?

Sri Aurobindo: The force that supports the work, the vital force, is different from the Divine Consciousness.

Disciple: Do you remember one Kulkarni who came and was complaining that his vital force was being drawn out?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. He was surrounded by forces of disintegration, chaos, disaster and death. And he was unconsciously throwing it out.

Disciple: One of us told you that Kulkarni had strength and intensity. Then you said something remarkable: "You call it strength? It is some wild intensity of weakness, not strength!"

Sri Aurobindo: Intensity with solidity pays; but without support below, it does not lead to anything. B was like that and so was J.

Disciple: But B did brilliant work.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. What he did was brilliant but slight, there was nothing below to support, the intensity had no body so to say. He went because of his ambition, he wanted to be my right-hand man. Mother had put a divine entity into him; it left him when he left the place. He has failed all through.

Disciple: But he was a good lieutenant in the old days.

Sri Aurobindo: There are some people who are good as lieutenants, but themselves they are nothing. B is like that. I supported him but he used to leave one thing and go in for another. He spoiled his career through his own fault.

Disciple: Some people say that now he speaks unfavourably about the Ashram.

Sri Aurobindo: We know that. To M who was coming here he said about me: "He has caught you by his philosophy."

But the Mother knows these things even without any reports from outside.

Disciple: Our friend D who has the eternal doubter in him met

Upen Banerjee at Calcutta and asked him whether he believed in God.

Sri Aurobindo: What did Upen say?

Disciple: He said: "How can I say I don't believe in God when I know Sri Aurobindo? I have a measuring rod for men and I can measure them all right; but in Sri Aurobindo's case I cannot measure him. In case of other great people they reach a certain point in their growth and then they stop, whereas in his case he is always going on further and further."

Sri Aurobindo (*smiling*)**:** I see. Upen also had intensity; he had agnosticism and faith. It is that which makes his writing brilliant. But he could never understand the *Arya.* Why, Rishikesh [*Kanjilal*] also was one in whom doubt could never get the better of faith and faith could not of doubt! (*Laughter*) He always wanted to fix himself to some anchor, — he could not give up seeking, nor pursue steadily and find an anchor. "The movement will not grow," he used to say. (*After a pause*) The revolutionaries were quite an interesting lot though not fit for yoga, and one could not feel dull in their company.

Disciple: K was enthusiastic about Sadhana.

Sri Aurobindo: He was. But he was not able to stand the trial of Yoga. I dont think he had the capacity to do the Yoga; he had too tall an idea about himself, and he was crude. And as to Kh I wonder how he could ever have done the Yoga.

♑

16 JANUARY 1939

Disciple: I read a paper written by Prof. Somesh Bose, a mathematician, in which he mentions that Bholagiri, a Sadhu, had meditation with his wife who was dead. Bose says that he saw them

both — his dead wife was present "in flesh and blood". The question is: Is it possible? Also, whether Bholagiri materialised his wife or she did it herself? Somesh says, she was present every day at the prayer time. Can she remain like that in her materialised body almost all the time? Does she live with Bholagiri all the time, or does she come and go? What will materialists say?

Disciple: They will say, it is all humbug. (*Turning to Sri Aurobindo*) But what does Yoga say?

Sri Aurobindo: "Many possibilities." This seems to be a case of temporary materialising, as Bholagiri is present every time. I believe, there is always a difference between a material body and a materialised body. This kind of materialising commonly takes place immediately after a man dies. You find that he visits either a relation or a friend. If the fact of his death is not known or if the man is not known to be living far away, people mistake it for an actual physical presence.

There are many authentic cases of this kind. My poetic brother Manmohan's friend, Stephen Philips said that his mother visited him after her death. Manmohan told me the story, ascribing the experience to telepathic communication of the form. But I think it is not mere communication of form or cast by the mind only. There is the vital-physical part which materialises.

Disciple: You have already cited the other day the case of Lord Strathmore. But is it possible to materialise completely?

Sri Aurobindo: Theoretically it should be possible, though I have known no case of the same. After the experience we had of the stone-throwing in the Guest House here, I believe if the stones could be materialised, why not a human being?

Disciple: The Egyptians preserved the human body after death, with a belief that the soul would return to it after some years. Paul Brunton claims to have met some spirit hoary with age on the hill near the pyramids.

Sri Aurobindo: The Egyptians believed that at the time of death the Ka, the vital being, went out of the man and after a thousand years, if the body was preserved, it would return to it. Brunton, I suppose, materialised the belief.

Disciple: Is it possible to revitalise the dead?

Sri Aurobindo: I can't say.

Disciple: There is a reported case of a Bey whom Brunton met and who revived a sparrow after it was dead. Brunton says that he saw the same phenomenon performed by Vishuddhananda. Is it possible?

Sri Aurobindo: That is possible. Just as you can revive a drowned man by resorting to physical devices, life can be restored. If you know how to reintroduce the power that sets the organism to action, after the body is wounded or dead, you can revive the man.

The real question is whether it is the being of the man that comes back to life, or it is some other spirit that wants to manifest and gets hold of the body. Both are possible, because revival is done in two ways: One is to bring back the spirit of the man which is still not far away, the other is to get some other spirit that consents to come.

Disciple: Can the vital being be called back into the body?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, if it has not gone away very far, it can be pulled back into the body.

There was a humorous sequel to a telegram requesting "ashes".

Disciple: I don't understand why he is asking for ashes.

Sri Aurobindo: I don't understand how I am supposed to be carrying ashes — perhaps on my head! When I used to smoke I could have sent at least the cigar ashes. But now I don't smoke!

Disciple: But we are burning mosquito coils here. The ashes of the coils can be sent! (*Laughter*)

Disciple: But I think he is asking for blessings. The post office in receiving the Sanskrit word *āshis* has turned it into "ashes". (*Laughter*)

Disciple: There is also X's recent telegram.

Disciple: Yes, it read "Nirodashram" instead of Nirodbaran.

Disciple: When is X coming?

Disciple: He is coming after organising his property.

Sri Aurobindo: Is he still "organising"?

Disciple: Has he much property left?

Disciple: I am afraid he has lost everything.

Sri Aurobindo: He is a phenomenon!

Do you remember the name of the man who apologised to us? I wonder whether he offered the apology because his public attack did not succeed.

Disciple: Yes. He seemed to have gathered all sorts of false facts from all kinds of people.

Disciple: Did you read his book?

Sri Aurobindo: I simply glanced at it! I don't think he sold more than half a dozen copies.

(*After a pause*) It seems M has expressed sorrow for what she did here and explained that she acted under the influence of S and B.

Disciple: In the attack by R there were no real allegations. His objection and that of many others is that the Ashram is not doing what he calls public work.

Sri Aurobindo: What work?

Disciple: Say the country's work, work for humanity.

Sri Aurobindo: It is quite a new objection. Nobody expects an Ashram, a spiritual institution, to do work!

Disciple: The Ramakrishna Mission, Gandhi's Ashram, and some other institutions do some public work and so people expect an Ashram to work for humanity.

Sri Aurobindo: Perhaps because I did political work they expect that I should continue doing it all my life.

Disciple: Not only that, the objection is that so many young men are being drawn away from the field of work.

Sri Aurobindo: Oh, I see.

Disciple: But Gandhi's Ashram is not a spiritual institution. It is a group of people gathered to be trained to do some work on the Mahatma's principles and methods. One can say that service to the public is one of their aims.

Disciple: Subhas also wrote against the Ashram recently on the ground that it was attracting away some of the best people from the country's work. He quoted the example of D.

Sri Aurobindo: Is D one of his 'best' people?

Disciple: I don't remember if he wrote best or good, for those who came here.

Sri Aurobindo: But D was not doing political work. He was doing music!

Disciple: Subhas's idea was that D may not do political work now. But when the time comes he must be prepared to give up everything and join the struggle.

Sri Aurobindo: I see. One can't give up everything for God!

Disciple: But suppose one gives up everything for the country's freedom, then what is he to do afterwards, except perhaps go to jail.

Sri Aurobindo: D in jail! Perhaps he would write some stories about his agony.

Disciple: That, perhaps, would be a gain to literature, not to politics.

Sri Aurobindo: At the time of the Gandhi movement someone asked Abanindranath Tagore, why he was not giving up his painting for the sake of the country and taking to politics. He said: "I serve the country through my painting in which I have some capacity — that, at least, is something I know; whereas I would be only a bad politician."

Disciple: Tagore narrowly escaped the Charkha. But it seems Nandalal Bose is turning towards it.

Sri Aurobindo: He is a man of ascetic temperament. There was an enthusiast who even wrote an article showing that the Chakra referred to in the Gita was the Charkha!

Disciple: It was Vinoba Bhave, a disciple of the Mahatma.

The topic changed to Baroda. Dr. M mentioned that now the Race Course Road is crowded with fine buildings constructed by Co-operative Societies, and Dr. Bhulabhai was living in one of them.

Sri Aurobindo: Bhulabhai is still alive?

Disciple: Yes. He is nearly eighty-five.

Sri Aurobindo (*after a pause*)**:** The mention of Baroda brought to my mind my connection with the Gaekwad. It is strange how things arrange themselves at times. When I failed in the I.C.S. riding test and was looking for a job, exactly at that time the Gaekwad happened to be in London. I don't remember whether he called us or we met him. An elderly gentleman whom we consulted wanted us to propose Rs. 200 per month. It was just a little more than 10 pounds, and it is surprising that he thought it was very good! But I left the negotiations to my eldest brother and James Cotton. I knew nothing about life at that time. And the Gaekwad went about telling people that he had got a civilian for just 200 rupees. (*Laughter*)

Disciple: What were your expenses in those days?

Sri Aurobindo: Before the war, it was quite decent living for

£5/-. Our landlady was an angel. She came from Somerset and had settled in London — perhaps after she was widowed. She was long suffering and never asked us for money even if we did not pay for months and months. (We had two landladies — the other one also was very nice to us.) I wonder how she managed. I paid her from my I.C.S. stipend.

It was Father's fault that I failed in the riding test. He did not send money and the riding lessons at Cambridge then were rather costly. The master was also careless; so long as he got his money he simply left me with the horse and I was not particular. I tried riding again at Baroda with Madhav Rao but it was not successful. My failure was a great disappointment to my father because he had arranged everything for me through Sir Henry Cotton. A post was kept for me in the district of Arrah which was considered a fine place. All that came down like a wall.

(*After a pause*) I wonder what would have happened to me if I had joined the civil service. I think, they would have chucked me for laziness and arrears of work! (*Laughter*)

The talk changed to Gandhiji's demilitarisation.

Disciple: While presiding over a conference of youths Nana Saheb has spoken against non-violence. He advocates military training for all young men for India's defence. Did you know Nana Saheb Shinde?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, I knew him very well. He, Madhav Rao and I had all revolutionary ideas. At that time we wanted to bring about an armed rebellion to drive out the British.

It is good that someone raises a voice like that when efforts are being made to make non-violence a method of solving all problems.

But has Gandhi succeeded in disarming the frontier Pathans?

Disciple: It seems he objected strongly to armed volunteers keeping watch over him while he was in the Frontier Province.

Sri Aurobindo: And what should they do in case there was an attack? Stand around simply?

Disciple: No. They have to die resisting!

Sri Aurobindo: This non-violent resistance I have never been able to fathom. I can understand an attitude of absolute non-resistance to Evil; as the Christians say, "Resist not the Evil." You may die without resisting and accept the consequences as sent by God. But to resist passively seems to me meaningless. And to change the opponents heart by such passive resistance is something I don't understand.

Disciple: And the *Modern Review* put in another objection which is worth considering. The article accepts that non-violence may be a good gospel for a great saint but for the ordinary man to allow evil to triumph so easily, by passive resistance, would not be good for the society. There is no reason to hope that the goonda will change his mind, or heart, if you allow him to kill you.

Sri Aurobindo: Exactly, and Gandhi has been trying to apply it to other fields whereas its extreme application is meant for spiritual life. Non-violence or Ahimsa as a spiritual attitude and practice is perfectly understandable and has a standing. You may not accept it in toto but it has a basis in Reality. You can live it in spiritual life but to try to apply it to ordinary life is absurd. You ignore, as the Europeans do, the great principle of Adhikara, qualification. Also it makes no provision for the difference in situations.

Disciple: The Mahatma's point is that in either case, whether with or without arms, you are prepared to die, so why not try now without arms? Since armaments are piling up and there is no end to where it will all lead, you are only perpetuating killing.

Sri Aurobindo: But then why not die fighting? Of course, if it is a question of expense then the reasons for non-violence, we must admit, are economic and not ethical.

(*After a pause*) It is a principle which can be applied with success

if practised on a mass scale, specially by unarmed people like the Indians, because you are left: with no other choice. But even when it succeeds it is not that you have changed the heart of the enemy, but that you have made it impossible for him to rule. That is what happened in Ireland. There was in Ireland armed resistance also but that would not have succeeded without the passive resistance side by side. Such tremendous generalisations like "Passive resistance for all," "Charkha for all," "Celibacy for all" hardly work.

♑

17 JANUARY 1939

Photographs of Pagal Hamath and Kusum Devi were shown to Sri Aurobindo. A declaration from Matushri Kusum that she was the Supreme Power and that Harnath was one of her forces, was written under one of the photographs.

Sri Aurobindo: That is the Tantric doctrine.

Disciple: But Harnath was a Vaishnava.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, but the doctrine she has proclaimed is not a Vaishnava doctrine, it is Tantric.

Disciple: Is it true?

Sri Aurobindo: In principle it is true; for the Supreme Shakti is the Divine Force and all the Gods are from Her. It is said that even Shiva cannot act unless She gives him power to act.

Disciple: Harnath had his decisive spiritual experience in Kashmir where, it is related, Gauranga came to him and gave him his 'mission'. But his later disciples regard him as equal to Gauranga.

Disciple: But where is the difficulty? If the Consciousness is ultimately and essentially Divine, why should not Gauranga and

Hamath be one in consciousness?

Disciple: They want to prove him to be as great an Avatar as Chaitanya.

Sri Aurobindo: Oh, there is competition between two Avatars? Did Harnath proclaim himself an Avatar?

Disciple: No, but he behaved like one. There are cases of very rapid conversions of people who have met him.

Sri Aurobindo: I have found that Vaishnava Bhakti makes for very strong and rapid progress.

Disciple: There is a line of Sadhus in Gujarat, who worship the Impersonal God.

Sri Aurobindo: Worship of the Impersonal God?

Disciple: They do not have any personal God, but they worship the One who is everywhere, beyond 'personality'. Kabir and some other saints also believed in this. Even when they take a particular Name of God, they mean by it something more than that Name. They will say "Rama" but they believe in various aspects of Rama.

Ek Rāma Dasaratha ghara jāyo; ek Rāma, ghat ghat me bole
Ek Rāmakā submen pasārā; ek Rāma saban te nyārā

Disciple: Does Nyara mean the Transcendent?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, the Absolute, the Supreme.

Disciple: The couplet says: one Rama is born in Dasharatha's house and is therefore subject to change, perhaps Kshara. One Rama is present in every heart, and one is all-pervading and therefore universal, and one Rama is beyond all.

Sri Aurobindo: That seems to be the same thing as the Gita's idea of Vasudeva that is in all and Vasudeva that is the Supreme Absolute: both are the same. Worship of the Impersonal Divine may not be as powerful for change — it tends to be more etherealised and the knowledge that enters into it makes devotion less intense or

rapid.

Disciple: We have heard that you received guidance from Sri Krishna in your Sadhana: was it from Sri Krishna of Brindavan or of Kurukshetra?

Sri Aurobindo: I should think it was of Kurukshetra.

Disciple: These distinctions between various personalities of Krishna, one of Brindavana and others are of later growth in Vaishnavism.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. They regard Bala Gopal as the Delight aspect or the Delight-Consciousness; but there are older schools of Vaishnavism that regarded Krishna as an Avatar of Vishnu.

Disciple: Krishna of Kurukshetra is, I suppose, the one who gave the Gita.

Sri Aurobindo: The one who spoke the Gita is the Vishnu aspect.

Disciple: Arjuna could not bear his sight and had to ask him to resume his human form.

Sri Aurobindo: In the *Vishnu Purāna* all the aspects of Vishnu are nicely described. It is one of the Puranas I have read through carefully. I wonder how it has escaped general notice because it is magnificent poetry.

There is a humorous passage in it, where a disciple asks the Guru whether the king is on the elephant or the elephant on the king. (*Laughter*)

Disciple: The king must be Ramamurthy if the elephant was to be on him.

Sri Aurobindo: Then the Guru jumps on the shoulders of the disciple and asks him whether he is on the disciples back or the disciple on his back. (*Laughter*)

There is also a very fine description of Jada Bharata.

Disciple: Is it true? Did Jada Bharata exist?

Sri Aurobindo: I don't know. But it sounds very real in the Purana, where it is placed.

It is also the most anti-Buddhist Purana.

Disciple: Then it must have been written late.

Disciple: Buddha was born around 500 B.C.

Sri Aurobindo: It is not so early as that; all the Puranas are posterior to Buddhism. They are a part of the Brahminical revival which came as a reaction against Buddhism in the Gupta period.

Disciple: The Puranas, even the earliest, are supposed to have been written about the 3rd or the 4th century A.D.

Sri Aurobindo: Most probably. In the *Vishnu Purāna*, Buddha is regarded an Avatar of Vishnu who came to deceive the Asuras. He is not referred to by that name but is called Mayamoha. The reference to Buddha is very clear; it repeats, "Budhyaswa! Budhyaswa!" It is a fine work.

Disciple: It is said that the Tantras are derived from the Vedas.

Disciple: There is nothing in the Veda to justify their claim except one solitary Sukta called the Ambhrani Sukta. It is a Valkhilya. There Ambhrani speaks of herself as the creatrix of the Gods. Of course one can take Aditi, the infinite Divine Consciousness, as the root of the Tantra if one likes.

Sri Aurobindo: The principle of Tantra may be as old as the Veda but the known Tantras are a later development.

Disciple: The Vedas are considered the highest authority in India, so everything wants to peg itself on to the Vedas — not only Tantra, but art, dancing, etc.

Sri Aurobindo: I don't understand this passion for antiquity. What does it matter when a thing took place? Truth is Truth whenever it may be found.

Disciple: But the Vedas are considered eternal.

Sri Aurobindo: They are eternal because the source of their inspiration is eternal.

Disciple: Someone has said that the eternal Veda is in everybody's heart.

Disciple: It is Sri Aurobindo who has said that in his *Synthesis of Yoga.* You are quoting him to himself! (*Laughter*)

Sri Aurobindo: The Upanishads came after the Vedas and they put in plainer language the same Truth that was in them. In the Vedas the language is symbolic.

But the Upanishads are equally great. Even in the Veda there are passages which clearly show that the Vedantic Truth is contained in the Veda. But it is surprising that the readers of the Veda miss those passages. For instance, the Veda says *ritena ritam apihitam* — "Truth is hidden by the Truth", and then "It is that One", that is the source. It is clear that it refers to the Vedantic Truth of the One. Similarly, the Upanishads speak of the Vedic symbols. The Ishopanishad speaks of the Vedic Gods Surya and Agni, but you can see that the significance there is symbolic.

Veda, Upanishad, Gita all are equally great.

Disciple: The Europeans thought that it was not possible to believe that the Vedic Rishis were so advanced — specially in those primitive times.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, they were so satisfied when they found the historical interpretation that they did not care for many obvious indications. But you must admit that the interpretation turning the Vedic Gods to gases is magnificently ingenious.

Disciple: Was it not Paramashiva Aiyar, a Mysorian, who showed that remarkable ingenuity?

Sri Aurobindo: I think that is the man.

Disciple: He is trying to prove in his book on the Veda that the

Veda shows the condition of earth in the glacial period and then indicates its geological evolution. I gave him up when I came upon his explanation of *parame vyōman* as meaning the "trough" and "crest" of ocean waves.

Many Riks of Dirghatamas are untranslated even today in spite of all ingenious theories and interpretations.

Sri Aurobindo: You can't understand or translate them unless you have the key to the symbolism.

♑

19 JANUARY 1939

Dr. R's visit: In the course of his talk he remarked, in connection with the swelling of Sri Aurobindo's knee-joint, that all disease or illness is of the nature of inflammation. After he departed, Sri Aurobindo asked N: "In what sense is all illness an inflammation?" N explained as well as he could.

Then yesterday's topic of Aldous Huxley's book *Ends and Means* was taken up by a disciple.

Disciple: Huxley suggests two ways of solving the problems of man. One, by changing the existing institutions of education, industries, in fact by modifying social, political, economic and religious institutions. This would bring about a change in the individual. So far as industries are concerned he suggests the creation of small units federated to a central organisation. Thus it would eliminate large units which are the roots of all troubles. The second remedy he suggests is to change the individual and make him, what he calls "non-attached", one who would practise virtue with disinterestedness. I believe there is a French author who also advocates such new types of industrial institutions.

Sri Aurobindo: That was also my idea when I proposed to

Motilal to have a spiritual commune. I did not call it a commune but a Sangha — a community based on spirituality and living its own economic life; it would have its own industries and agriculture. And a network of such communities spread all over the country would exchange their products among themselves.

Disciple: You gave him the idea of the paper also?

Sri Aurobindo: I don't remember. But I asked him to start hand-looms and weaving.

Disciple: He has tried to take up the Gandhian plan after he separated from us; we used to insist on Swadeshi, now they call it Khaddar.

Disciple: The financial condition there does not seem as sound as it is made to appear.

Sri Aurobindo: Possibly. I do not know what they are doing now. I heard that some plots were bought in the Sunderbans to start agriculture. But as people were getting malaria, it had to be given up.

Disciple: Is it something like Dayalbagh? I don't know what spirituality they are having there. It seems as if all their energies are directed to external work and industries.

Sri Aurobindo: That may be due to their large-scale production. I heard that Anukul Thakur also has started work on the same idea.

Disciple: Does he not belong to Dayalbagh?

Sri Aurobindo: No. He may belong to what they call the Radhaswami School. But I don't think he belongs to Dayalbagh.

Disciple: But to start such a Sangha one must have spiritual realisation and it may take a long time to start.

Sri Aurobindo: Not necessarily. Obviously if one is to wait for spiritual realisation it will take time. But all may not have the highest or supramental realisation. Spiritual experience is enough for the people and that is not difficult to have. I told M that

spirituality must be the basis of the Sangha. Otherwise, your success will be your failure. But he does not seem to have listened to it.

(*After a pause*) There were other religious communes of this sort before. The Dukhobor commune in Russia was very powerful and well organised, strong in its faith. They held together in spite of all persecution. At last they had to emigrate to Canada. One of their tenets was nudism, which the Canadian Government did not like and they got into trouble.

Disciple: They had at least solved the weaving problem. (*Laughter*)

Sri Aurobindo: Then there were the Mormons who became famous in the United States. The name of their founder was Joseph Smith — a prosaic name for a prophet! But Brigham Young was a very remarkable man, who really built this commune. Curiously enough one of their tenets was polygamy. Their religion was based on the Old Testament. When they were made to give up polygamy they became quite like ordinary men. Mark Twain said that when the chief was interrogated in the presence of his members he replied that he knew his children by numbers, not by their names!

There was another commune in America which did not allow marriage among its members.

Disciple: Do you know of any such commune in India?

Sri Aurobindo: The Sikhs are the only community organised on a religious basis. Thakur Dayananda established, or tried to establish, an order of married Sannyasins.

Disciple: I heard that Anukul Thakur also adopted it for his disciples.

Sri Aurobindo: Disciples are another matter — they are allowed to marry.

Disciple: I think he permitted the Sannyasins to marry.

Sri Aurobindo: The same principle is accepted by Vaishnavas who follow the Nityananda school — they accept a Vaishnavi.

Disciple: All sorts of attempts at collective life seem to have been made and when one sees them all, one is driven to despair like the bald man — who was trying all kinds of remedies to cure baldness — who, on looking at King Edward VII's photo with his shining bald head, said, "I give it up!" (*Laughter*)

Have you any idea how the Supermind will proceed?

Sri Aurobindo: No idea. If you have an idea the result will be what has been in the past. We must leave the Supermind to work everything out.

Disciple: But that sort of work has to be based on love. One must have love for everyone.

Sri Aurobindo: Love is not enough. Something more than love is necessary. Unity of consciousness is more important than love.

Disciple: The trouble is, as soon as one begins something one tends to become ego-centric, and quarrels start — like the aggravation of a symptom in homeopathy. (*Laughter*)

Sri Aurobindo: But love also leads to quarrels. Nobody quarrels more than the lovers do! (*Laughter*)

(*Looking at X*) You know the Latin proverb that each quarrel is a renewal of love?

Love is a fine flower, but unity of consciousness is the root.

The difficulty is that when those who are here receive something of the Higher Power and gather it in the vital and turn it to their lower nature, they become ego-centric, they think it is their own power. When H came here from Chandernagore he said, "There everybody is a sheep following the shepherd but here everybody is a Royal Bengal Tiger." (*Laughter*)

Disciple: Somebody also said that here it is a zoo where each one is a lion roaring in his own den.

Sri Aurobindo: When we were very few and the Ashram had not grown, B and S used to convert all sorts of people to spirituality; they were great propagandists. B once caught hold of a young Tamilian who was quite sheepish. B used to meet him. After three or four months of contact it was found that the young man had become quarrelsome, violent and insolent — a great transformation had come over him! (*Laughter*) It was S who made D a public leader. At any rate, the one thing he did was to make D get rid of all scruples: "Right and wrong don't matter, good and evil are nothing," he used to tell.

Disciple: And now D is trying to live up to it.

Sri Aurobindo: D used to say to Dr. Le Mongnac, "It is impossible for me to fail because I am a Godman." He said to many people here that he is not afraid because he is Sri Aurobindo's disciple. He got his power from the Mother and all agree that he is the one man who can do something if he wants to.

Mrs. R wrote to us, "What has N come to at Pondicherry? He is writing to us 'do this' and 'do that', and finds fault with our work." Of course, they were quarrelling in Japan also when they were there. They held to their different views about their work.

B came straight from A. A was another great propagandist. He caught anyone he could and made him do the Yoga — of course, it was *his* yoga. He did not think that any such thing as Adhikara was necessary.

Disciple: We had a hard tussle with Mahatmaji's followers over the question of transcending morality and immorality in a man of spiritual realisation and the resultant conduct. They always think that going beyond morality means sinking to immorality. All that does not conform to their moral code is immoral!

Sri Aurobindo: Of course, all can't go beyond morality. So their theory is true in their own field. It is a mental rule and so long as one cannot come in contact with the dynamic Divine source of

action in himself, one has to be guided by some law of conduct — otherwise one might take up the attitude: "There is no virtue and no sin, so let us sin merrily."

What Krishna says in the Gita: *sarvadharmān parityajya* — abandoning all laws of conduct, is said at the end of the Gita and not in the beginning. And then that is not alone; there is also *māmekam sharanam vraja* — take refuge in Me alone. But before one finds within oneself the guidance of the dynamic Divine, one has to have some rule to guide himself. Most people have to pass through the Sattwic stage and the moral rule is true so far as these people are concerned. It is only a very few that can start above it.

Disciple: Can one say that the psychic being always wants transformation? There are people who believe that the psychic being in evolution would and must want transformation and only the Atman can merge into Laya, in the Divine. Can the developed psychic being not merge into Laya?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, it can. It depends on whether it is in front or not. If it is in front then, as I said, it takes charge of the nature and then its aspiration will be for transformation. But the developed psychic being can take any other spiritual direction. It depends on what direction the Divine within chooses. We cannot dictate to the soul what it shall choose; all are not compelled towards transformation.

Disciple: What is the kind of transformation that takes place?

Sri Aurobindo: The psychic transformation is the first one. Many yogis achieve this transformation. All saints have psychic transformation: it is the pure Bhakta-nature. But all spiritual men are not saints. Of course, both can go together sometimes.

Disciple: Is there a distinction between saints and spiritual persons?

Sri Aurobindo: Of course there is. Saints are limited by their psychic nature, but spiritual men are not. The saint, generally,

proceeds from and lives in the heart-centre. The spiritual man might live in other higher centres — say, above the head, in the spiritual consciousness.

Disciple: It is not quite clear to me, the distinction.

Sri Aurobindo: The saint lives in the psychic being, that is, in the Purusha in the heart, but the spiritual man may live above the head, in the spiritual consciousness. I never felt like a saint myself — though Maurice Magre calls me "a philosopher and a saint". Krishna, for instance, was not a saint. A spiritual man may not always behave like a saint, he may have many other things in him, say like Rishi Durvasa.

Disciple: But saints are nearer to humanity; they are not like the Ishwara-Koti to whom no laws apply, for they are on the top of the human ladder.

Disciple: In this Yoga, it seems, one has to fight like Arjuna, in the battle of Kurukshetra, because it is a Yoga of fight and battle and conquest.

Sri Aurobindo: Not necessarily; it depends on the nature of the being. There are some people, for instance, who when they meet the hostile forces in the vital or in dream begin to fight, while there are others who call for protection. If one has the psychic attitude one need not fight. Fighting is for the mental or the vital man; in the case of the mental type the fight is with ideas.

Disciple: Some people regard quarrelling with the Divine as the psychic way.

Sri Aurobindo: In that case, many people are psychic in this Ashram!

Disciple: I remember Y's letter referring to Ramprasad's song claiming that the Divine must satisfy his demand because he had sacrificed everything for the Divine.

Sri Aurobindo: Claim based on what? His argument seems to

be: "You must give me the thing because I badly want it."

Disciple: What did you reply to him?

Sri Aurobindo: It was not addressed to me. It was addressed to Krishna.

Disciple: Then, I will ask him to write to you now.

Sri Aurobindo: No, don't do that. (*Laughter*) Otherwise, I will have to be as hard as Krishna.

Disciple: They say that Shiva is a very kind and generous God.

Sri Aurobindo: I don't know. He is very kind to the demons also. He gives them very inconvenient boons and finds it difficult to wriggle out afterwards. He is a God who does not care for consequences. Generally Vishnu or somebody else has to come in to save the situation.

Disciple: Krishna is hard to please, they say.

Disciple: Talking of Krishna reminds me of Yogi Z, whose sadhana seemed to be going on very well but, they say, he is now attracted to Buddhism.

Sri Aurobindo: Good Lord!

Disciple: I do not know if he has been attracted to a woman, but there was some such report.

Sri Aurobindo: It is sad if it is true. In one of his letters to Y he wrote that one need not be a eunuch in order to be a master of sex.

Realisation is something very precious and one should guard it and live in it like in a fortress. One can go on adding whatever knowledge one wants or gets but always guarding ones realisation. For instance, it is not at all necessary to give up Bhakti to get Jnana.

I found it difficult to go through his commentary on the Gita. It is more intellectual, it lacks the life and the heart. Otherwise, it was always a pleasure to read his writings. He seems to have lost the intensity of mental vision, the seeing mind which he had, but I

thought that it was due to his turning towards Knowledge.

His attraction towards Buddhism is understandable, because to the European rational mind its rationalism has an appeal. It was through Buddhism that Europe came to and began to know India. Blavatsky founded her Theosophy on Buddhism. Next they understood Shankara in Europe and for many years the Europeans thought there was nothing in India except Shankaras Adwaita. But if Z has taken to Buddhism, his sex attraction is not justifiable. Buddhism is the most exacting path. It is most unindulgent, severe and dry; it is a path of Tapasya.

Disciple: He had perhaps a great mental pride.

Disciple: He said to Y that sex was not a problem for him.

Sri Aurobindo: That is vital over-confidence. Perhaps in the course of Sadhana some opening has taken place in the vital.

Disciple: But can a Sadhak fall like that after such fine realisations as he had?

Sri Aurobindo: What do you mean by realisations? There is always the possibility of being Yoga-Bhrashta [*fallen from yoga*].

♑

20 JANUARY 1939

After a discussion of local affairs about which there were conflicting news.

Sri Aurobindo: I find Z's letter to Y is written with his usual clear vision. He advises Y to guard against mixing up his own feeling of personal wrong with the legitimate decision not to shake hands with one who has wronged the Guru. Then he says, "These people like M, when they take to Yoga it is more ornamental than anything else." It is a fine phrase "ornamental Yoga".

Disciple: About Z becoming a Buddhist, Y said it is only that Z does not want to belong to any particular sect.

Sri Aurobindo: That is understandable.

Disciple: Nothing seems to have come out of the Chamberlain-Mussolini interview. Both parties say they are satisfied with the results.

Sri Aurobindo: I can't understand England's policy. I don't know what she is after. France is being led by England, — being stuck to her like a tail. It is said that Mussolini is waiting for General Franco's victory in Spain, then he will present his terms to France. Franco's victory will be dangerous for France. But it is very difficult to see how England profits by this. For as soon as Italy and Germany have crushed France, the next victim will be England. England knows very well Mussolini's ambition to create an Italian empire, and that means he will try to regain all that once belonged to Italy. England is deliberately raising Hitler and Mussolini against France and letting her down. I do not know why unless the three want to share the empire of France, and then England may try to put Hitler and Mussolini against each other. That may be her traditional self-centred policy, but it is a very risky game.

Disciple: But is it possible? Can England remain aloof when France fights with the other powers?

Sri Aurobindo: Why not? Chamberlain has said that as long as England's interests are not involved she is not obliged to fight. England will say that Italy's demands have not been satisfied and so she has gone to war and Germany has joined her. There was no aggression on Italy's part, and so England is not obliged to come to the aid of France; any number of excuses could be given. Daladier told a friend (who is also a friend of our Suryakumari) that he had to betray Czechoslovakia because Chamberlain told him that England will support him as far as it is diplomatically possible, but in case of war France should not count on England.

Disciple: I wonder why Flandin wants to support Franco when Blum is against him. You know Flandin even sent a telegram to Mussolini conveying his congratulations! Hitler counts Flandin as a friend — does he intend to join the Rome-Berlin axis and thus keep out England?

Sri Aurobindo: How is that possible unless France satisfies Italy's demands? After the Spanish question is settled, Italy is almost sure to claim Tunis, Nice, Djibouti. Is Flandin prepared to give them? Italy wants her empire in Africa. So, Tunis and Djibouti are essential for her to be the master in the Mediterranean. Blum is incapable; it was he who applied non-intervention in the Spanish question.

At present it seems two people are brandishing their arms against everybody and the rest are somehow trying to save themselves. The one man who has seen through the whole thing is Roosevelt, but he is too far and he is not sure of the support of the American people.

Disciple: What about Russia?

Sri Aurobindo: Russia is unreliable. One does not know its military strength. At one time she was supposed to have the biggest air-force. But according to Lindberg it does not seem to be so. The internal state of Germany also is not known. They are trying to conceal everything as far as possible.

Disciple: Jawaharlal says that Hitler and his generals did not expect the non-resistance which they met from Austria. They were all very much surprised.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, the generals were opposed to Hitler's plan, for they were not prepared to fight. Now Hitler will say: "Have you seen that I am right? Things have happened as I told you."

Disciple: Jawaharlal said that the threatened attack against Czechoslovakia was mainly bluff. All the tanks and machine guns were only a sham.

Sri Aurobindo: It can't be reliable news; the Germans are too disciplined for that.

Disciple: There is some trouble in Holland. Germany is threatening to cut off all trade with her and establish a trade-route through Antwerp instead of Amsterdam.

Sri Aurobindo: If that takes place it will make Chamberlain fight in spite of himself. England does not want any German navy in the North Sea. But Germany wont do that unless she wants war with England.

(*A disciple spoke of the canal scheme of Russia to enable to connect herself with Asia and the Arctic Sea. Then the topic of Lady B., an American visiting the Ashram in the company of Nishtha* (*Miss Wilson*), *came up*.)

Sri Aurobindo: Lady B has visited India twice. The first time she went to Ramana Maharshi but was not satisfied with the place. She said there was no peace there.

Disciple: Was Mrs. Macleod impressed?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, she was very impressed. It was she who sent this lady. B has married a Lord in England; from his title the Lord does not seem to be a descendant of an old family. Has she come in her saloon-car?

Disciple: Yes. She goes about in that car everywhere.

Disciple: She must be very rich then.

Sri Aurobindo: An American married to a Lord means she has money. They marry for a title. But do you know why some people are dissatisfied with the Ramanashrama?

Disciple: They say it is not an organised Ashram. People build huts at their own cost; they are allowed meals only for three days by the general management; they are not obliged to live together for twenty-four hours as we do here; but there are, it seems, quarrels!

Sri Aurobindo: The 'harmony' comes out in that short time?

Disciple: People from outside witness similar quarrels here also. Monsieur H had the opportunity to see A's scuffle, I think.

Sri Aurobindo: Then he saw A in all his glory!

Disciple: I remember a joke from yesterday's talk about Bengal tigers. Someone said, "Everyone here is like a lion in his own den." Another put it more interestingly, "Everyone here is a general, there are no soldiers!" (*Laughter*)

Sri Aurobindo: And generalesses? (*Louder laughter*)

Disciple: In the days when X used to work here [*with Mother*] a newcomer asked him, "Who are the advanced sadhaks here?" He said, "I don't know." Then, after he was repeatedly pressed, he said, "I will tell you, but you must not tell anybody else. There are only two advanced sadhaks here — you and I." (*Laughter*)

Sri Aurobindo: This instance of "we two" reminds me of a joke of Hugo. Balzac told a friend that there are only two men who know how to write French, "Myself and Hugo." When it was reported to Hugo, he said, "That is all right, but why Balzac?" (*Laughter*)

There is a story of a Calvinist lady. Calvinists believe in the doctrine that people are predestined to go to either Heaven or Hell. Someone asked her, "Do you know where people of your congregation will go?" She said, "All will go to Hell, except myself and the minister. But I have doubts about the minister." (*Laughter*)

Disciple: Very similar is the case of Dr. R who is here. When he first came here I asked him about homeopaths. He said, "You see there are four topmost men in the line. One is in Calcutta, two are abroad, and I came here." (*Laughter*)

♑

21 JANUARY 1939

Dr. R's visit today. As usual he began the massage.

Dr. R: Do you feel the pain [*in the knee-joint*] still?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes.

Dr. R: That is because you are moving the leg after a long time; it will disappear when you are accustomed to it.

Sri Aurobindo: Accustomed to the pain? (*Laughter*)

After local politics, Buddhism etc., the talk turned to the war and the Congress. Pattabhi was elected President. Patel wanted to settle the Rajkot issue, or go to East Africa to offer Satyagraha there.

Disciple: I am afraid if Patel goes to East or South Africa the Indians there would be shot.

Sri Aurobindo: Instead of Patel going to Africa it is better that Gandhi should go to Hitler. Hitler will tell him: "You follow your inner voice Mr. Gandhi, I my own." There is no reason to say that he would be wrong, for my inner voice may be good and necessary for me, while it may not be so for another. The very opposite may be good and necessary for him. The Cosmic Spirit has one thing for Hitler and may lead him on the way he is going, while it may decide differently in another case.

Disciple: That may lead to a clash between the two and the breaking of the instruments.

Disciple: What of that? Something good may come out of it.

Disciple: That might lead to fatalism, or belief in destiny.

Sri Aurobindo: It may. There have been people who have believed in fate or destiny or whatever you may call it. Napoleon III used to say: "So long as something is necessary to be done by me it will be done in any case; when that necessity will cease, I shall be thrown on the wayside like an outworn vessel." And that is exactly

what happened to him. Napoleon Bonaparte also believed in fate.

Disciple: Yes. When somebody asked him, why did he plan if he believed in fate, he said: "It is also fated that I should plan."

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. All men who have been great and strong believe in some higher force greater than themselves, moving them. Socrates used to call this force his Daemon. It is curious how sometimes even in small things one depends on the voice. Once Socrates was walking with a disciple. When they came to a place where they had to take a turn, the disciple said, "Let us take this route." Socrates said: "No, my Daemon asks me to take the other." The disciple did not agree and followed his own route. After he had gone a certain distance he was attacked by a herd of pigs and thrown down by them.

There are some who do not follow an inner voice but an inner light. The Quakers believed in that.

Disciple: Do they see the light?

Sri Aurobindo: I don't know, but someone has said: "See that your light is not darkness." The strange thing is that the inner voice does not give any reason; it only says: "Do this; if you do not do it, bad results will follow." And strangely enough, bad results do follow if you don't listen to it. Lele used to say that whenever he did not follow his inner voice he had pain and suffering.

Disciple: But there are many kinds of voices due to the forces on different planes and it is extremely difficult to distinguish between the right or the true inner voice and a false one. There may be voices either from the mental, the vital or the subtle physical planes. Moreover, in the same person the voices may differ.

Sri Aurobindo: Quite true. Hitler's friend said about him that what Hitler said today he contradicted tomorrow.

I also heard a voice which asked me to come to Pondicherry; of course, it was the inner voice.

Disciple: Cannot one be mistaken?

Sri Aurobindo: It was impossible to make a mistake about, or disobey, that voice. There are some voices about which there can be no possibility of any doubt or mistake. Charu Chandra Roy wanted me to go to France so that we may have no further trouble. When I arrived at Chandernagore he refused to receive me and threw me on to Moti Roy.

Disciple: But why should he receive you?

Sri Aurobindo: Because as a revolutionary he was obliged to do so.

Disciple: Was he also a revolutionary?

Sri Aurobindo: Good Lord! We were together in jail and perhaps his jail experience frightened him. At the beginning he was a very ardent revolutionary.

Disciple: Nolini says he was weeping and weeping in jail. The jail authorities thought that he could not be a revolutionary when he wept so much, and so let him off. (*Laughter*)

Sri Aurobindo: No, that was not the reason. It was by the intervention of the French Government, I think, that he got his release. He was a very ardent revolutionary in the beginning. Barin one day walked into his house, gave him a long lecture on revolution and converted him in one day.

Disciple: I heard that Nivedita also was a revolutionary, is it true?

Sri Aurobindo: What do you mean? She was one of the revolutionary leaders. She went about visiting various places in India to come in contact with the people. She was open and frank and talked about her revolutionary plan to everybody. When she used to speak on revolution it was her very soul that spoke, her true personality used to come out. Yoga was yoga of course, but it was as if this work was intended for her: that was fire if you like. Her

book *Kali the Mother* is very inspiring, but it is revolutionary and not non-violent. She went about among the Thakurs of Rajputana trying to preach them revolution. At that time everybody wanted some sort of revolution. I met several Rajput Thakurs who, unsuspected by the Government, had revolutionary ideas. One of them, Thakur Ramsingh, joined our movement and was afterwards caught and put in jail. He suddenly died there in a short time. Moropant said, "He died out of fright." But he was not a man to be frightened. They may have poisoned him. Moropant, you know, later turned Moderate. More than one battalion in the Indian Army was ready to help us. I knew a Punjabi sentry at Alipur who spoke to me about the revolution.

Once Nivedita came to the Gaekwad and told him that it was his duty to join the revolution. She said, "If you have anything more to ask, you can ask Mr. Ghose." But the Gaekwad never talked politics with me afterwards.

But one thing I could not understand about Nivedita was her admiration for Gokhale. I wondered how a revolutionary could have any admiration for him. Once she was so much exercised when his life was threatened that she came to me and asked, "Mr. Ghose, is it one of your men doing this?" I said, "No." She was much relieved and said, "Then it must be a free-lance."

The first time she came to see me, she said, "I hear, Mr. Ghose, you are a worshipper of Shakti?" There was no non-violence about her. She had an artistic side too. Khaserao Jadhav and I went to receive her at the station. When she saw the Dharmashala near the station, she exclaimed, "How beautiful!" But looking at the College building she cried out, "How ugly!" Later Khaserao said, "She must be a little mad!"

Disciple: The College building is supposed to be an imitation of Eton.

Sri Aurobindo: But Eton has no dome!

Disciple: It is a combination of modern and ancient architecture.

Sri Aurobindo: At any rate it is an ugly dome. The Ramakrishna Mission was afraid of her political activities and asked her to keep them separate from the Missions work.

Disciple: What about her yogic achievements?

Sri Aurobindo: I don't know. Whenever we met we spoke about politics and revolution. But her eyes showed a power of concentration and a capacity for going into trance. She had got something in her spiritual life.

Disciple: She came to India with the idea of doing Yoga.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. But she took up politics as part of Vivekananda's work. Her book is one of the best on Vivekananda. Vivekananda himself had ideas about political work and revolution. Once he had a vision which corresponded to something like Maniktolla Garden. It is curious that many Sannyasins at that time had thought of India's freedom. Ramana Maharshi's young disciples were revolutionaries. Our Yogananda's Guru also had such ideas. Thakur Dayananda was also one such. (*Turning to a disciple*) Do you know one Mr. Manthelé?

Disciple: The one with spectacles?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes.

Disciple: Yes I know him. He has become a quiet man and settled down to ordinary life.

Sri Aurobindo: It was he who introduced me through someone to the secret society where I came in contact with Tilak and others.

Disciple: It seems Gandhi criticised Nivedita as volatile and mercurial. *The Modern Review* violetly protested and he had to recant.

Sri Aurobindo: Nivedita volatile? What nonsense! She was a solid worker.

♑

22 JANUARY 1939

Sri Aurobindo surprised N by asking him: "What about D's fast?" N had told him yesterday that D was going to fast on his birthday, i.e., today, but had forgotten about it.

Disciple: I hear he had taken bread and butter in the morning and at mid-day a light meal.

Sri Aurobindo: Fasting with bread and milk?

Disciple: There are people in Gujarat who believe that bread and milk can be taken in a fast. (*Laughter*)

Sri Aurobindo: That is also the custom in Bengal, I believe. It reminds me of a story. Nevinson went to see Tilak who met him wearing a dhoti. Reporting the meeting, Nevinson said, "Mr. Tilak met me *naked* in his loin-cloth." (*Laughter*)

(*At this time another disciple came in; he seemed to be bubbling with news*.)

Sri Aurobindo: What is the news?

Disciple: No news today. I read a fine joke about Soviet Russia in the book *Inside Europe*. Someone cries, "Help! A louse on Stalin's head!" Another says, "Socialise it; the rest will follow." (*Laughter*)

I also looked up what Lindberg said. He says that the Soviet air-fleet is not as powerful as it is thought.

Sri Aurobindo: In what way?

Disciple: I don't know.

Sri Aurobindo: That is very vague. Does he mean that the aeroplanes are not made of sound material, or that the pilots are not well-trained? If he says only that much, he does not give any knowledge.

In the war between Russia and Japan, the Japanese admitted that the Russian artillery was remarkable, it did not miss the mark, but the infantry was not good, for even when they got a very good opportunity they did not take advantage of it. On the other hand, the Japanese army is perhaps the best in the world. In spite of overwhelming numbers against them in China, they have been able to conquer. Chiang Kai-shek had trumpeted that he would defeat the Japanese in a very short time. They did not reply but at the end of each defeat the Japanese were further inside China than before.

Disciple: They say that the Japanese are not good in the air. They missed their aim many times.

Sri Aurobindo: I don't know about that. The Japanese are good at concentrating on one thing at a time, but a pilot is required to concentrate on many points at the same time.

Disciple: Mussolini is asking all Italian firms to close down at Djibouti, and thus create dissatisfaction. He is trying to cut off the railway connecting Djibouti and Abyssinia and make another line through Eritrea to Asmara.

Sri Aurobindo: That would still not make France give up Djibouti because it is an important sea-link between France and her eastern colonies. Even if the Premier and Flandin wanted to give it up the French people won't.

Disciple: I hear that Lady B stayed in Ramanashrama for about a week. She spent about a hundred rupees per day on her food. Mona says the husband's name doesn't seem to belong to an old aristocratic family. He is a rubber magnate — he manufactures tyres.

Sri Aurobindo: I don't understand how a Catholic could have that occupation.

Disciple: Heirloom perhaps?

Sri Aurobindo: Which? The tyre or Catholicism? (*Laughter*)

Disciple: What was Lady B's impression of our Ashram?

Sri Aurobindo: She was much impressed and was full of praise for the Mother; she thought it must be the work of a genius. But she thinks a genius can work without finances!

Disciple: But she seems to have contributed something.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, 5 pounds. Till now the Americans who have come here are either poor or rich ones who don't donate.

Disciple: She seems to have done better than Sir H who did not donate anything but took a loaf of bread back with him! (*Laughter*)

(*At this point the Mother came*)

Sri Aurobindo: N wanted to know Lady B's impressions.

Mother: She was full of compliments. She was much impressed by the tidiness, cleanliness and beauty in the Ashram. (*Addressing Sri Aurobindo*) She is not much more than a tourist. She is going to Japan to study with Suzuki. She has much admiration for genius, probably because genius does not require finance.

(*There was a pause of silence. The conversation seemed to have ended for the night when a disciple asked a question.*)

Disciple: Yesterday we had a talk about hearing the voice: is there any standard by which one can judge whether it is a true voice?

Sri Aurobindo: What standard? There is no such standard. How can you judge whether it is right or wrong?

Disciple: Then is Hitler who says, "I heard a voice and I follow it," right?

Sri Aurobindo: Right in what sense? Morally?

Disciple: He means spiritually, perhaps.

Sri Aurobindo: How can you say his voice is not right? He has seen that by following it he has been able to get Austria and Czechoslovakia, and he has been successful in many other things.

Then how can you say it is not a true voice? As I said, the Cosmic Spirit may want him to go that way. Even morally, you can't say that he is immoral. He is very restricted as regards food and is supposed to have no wife or mistress and leads a controlled life in all other respects. These are moral qualities. Robespierre was also a moral man and yet he killed many people.

Disciple: But then, what is meant by the 'true voice'?

Sri Aurobindo: That is the psychic voice. But the spiritual point of view is quite different. There is no question of right or wrong in it. One goes above all these standards and looks from that plane. But for that it is essential to have the perception and feeling of the Divine in all, veiled behind the Gunas. From that plane one finds that the Gita is right in what it says about the Gunas: that man is made to act by the action of the Gunas. There was an angry Sannyasi who came to the Kali Temple at Calcutta. Ramakrishna said about him: "He is a Tamasic Narayana." But he could not keep that standard when another Vedantin came there with a concubine. He asked the Vedantin: "Why do you keep a concubine?" The Vedantin replied: "Everything is Maya, so what does it matter what you do or do not do?" Ramakrishna said: "I spit on your Vedanta." But logically, the Vedantin was right. So long as you believe everything to be Maya you can do as you like. But how will you say which is right? For instance, what will you say about Curzon's action?

Disciple: About Bengal partition?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, was he right? He thought he was quite right in what he was doing, while others thought he was wrong. And yet, but for his action India would not have been half as free as she is today. So, the Cosmic Spirit may have, after all, led him to do it to bring this result. There is a Cabalist prophecy: the golden age will come when the Jews will be driven off and persecuted everywhere. So, Hitler may be bringing that about. There are so many ways of looking at a thing. For instance, this American lady thinks, perhaps,

that she is giving us a big sum, but we call it a joke.

Disciple: Then, can one say that one has no responsibility? One can do as one likes? In that case one becomes a fatalist.

Sri Aurobindo: No. One can't do as one likes. Everyone is not Hitler and can't do what Hitler does, because it is one's nature that makes one do things. Your question reminds me of the story of my grandmother. She said: "God has made such a bad world. If I could meet Him I would tell Him what I think of Him." My grandfather said: "Yes, it is true. But God has so arranged it that you can't get near Him so long as you have any such desire in you." (*Laughter*)

When we say that Hitler is possessed by a vital force it is a statement of fact, not a moral judgment. It is clear from what he does and the way he does it.

I remember a young Sannyasi with long nails who came to Baroda. He used to stay under trees. Deshpande and myself went to see him. Deshpande asked him: "What is the Dharma, the standard of action?" He replied, "There is no such standard. It is the Dharma of the thief to steal because that is his nature." Deshpande was very angry when he heard that. I said, "It is only a point of view."

But all this does not mean that there is no consequence for one's action. As Christ said, "Offence cometh but woe unto him by whom the offence cometh." There is a law of being which throws upon you the murder, persecution etc. you carry out; when you inflict suffering on others out of self-will, the suffering will come back to you, that is the law of Karma.

Disciple: S used to quote to me the famous verse of Duryodhana: *Jānāmi dharmam nacha me pravṛittih* — I know what is the Dharma but I can't gather force to do what I should do.

Sri Aurobindo: You have the other verse: "Seated in my heart, as Thou directest, I act."[20]

[20] त्वया हृषीकेश हृदि स्थितेन यथा नियुक्तोस्मि तथा करोमि।

The question comes up seriously when you want to change yourself or change others. When you say "This should not be" and "That should go", etc., you introduce a rule of mind in the vital, but when you go above the mind you come in contact with your spirit and the nature of the Spirit is Light, Truth, Purity. When you observe discipline it is for the Spirit, not for the sake of the mental rule. If you want to attain the standard of purity you have to reject what comes in the way. So also about lying. You have to stop lying if you want the Truth, not because of the mental principle of right and wrong, but for the sake of the Spirit. There are many parts in nature: One part may try to reject things that are contrary to the change and contradictory to each other, but another part prevents it. As the Roman poet said: "I see the better things but I follow the worse."

Disciple: Vedanta for some time was a byword for hypocrisy. People used to speak of them as *Bedantins* — with two sets of teeth, — one for showing and another for chewing, like the elephant. What is the truth of Varna Marga?

Sri Aurobindo: I don't know. It must have been with the idea of taking up forces and pulling them high up. Even the sexual act has to be done from a high consciousness. The Upanishad also says it is possible.

But to go back to our original point about the law of Nature. We have to understand that all this does not mean that there is no moral standard. Humanity requires a certain standard; it helps its progress. It is obvious from what Hitler is doing that he is not serving the forces of Light. He is serving what the Jews would call "the forces of unrighteousness". But from the spiritual point of view, that may also be necessary. As they say, "It takes all sorts to make the world."

But again all this does not mean that one should not recognise other planes. For instance, there is the vital plane whose laws are force and success. If you have the force you win. If you have speed

you outrun others. The laws of the mind come in and act as a means of balance. They balance diverse things to make a mental-vital standard.

If you go above the vital and mental planes you come to a point where the Gita's *Sarva dharmān parityajya* becomes the principle. But there if you leave out the last portion, *māmekam śaraṇam vraja* — take refuge in Me alone — then you follow your ego and you fall, and become either an Asura or a lunatic or an animal. But even the animals have a sense of right and wrong. That is very well shown in Kipling's *Jungle Book.* Have you read it?

Disciple: No.

Sri Aurobindo: There he shows how the pack falls on the one that fails to keep the standard. By human contact the animals develop that sense even more —

(*The Mother came in at this point with Sri Aurobindo's dinner. Then, after some time she departed.*)

Disciple: Is it true that the Supramental Being is Bhagawan?

Sri Aurobindo: All are Bhagawan, all are Divine.

Disciple: That is potential, or say, veiled Bhagawan; otherwise we have to accept that the world is perfect even as it is.

Sri Aurobindo: It is as perfect as it could be at present.

Disciple: That is to say a more perfect perfection has to be attained yet.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, it has to be.

♑

23 JANUARY 1939

Disciple: My friend N is hesitating to put to you a question. He

is puzzled by a contradiction in what you said yesterday about the Gunas.

Disciple: You said that the Cosmic Spirit might be leading Hitler on the way he is going and again you said that the Cosmic Spirit is not responsible for Hitler's actions. These two statements seem contradictory to me.

Sri Anrobindo: That is generally the case when one states some truth: one has to express it in contradictory terms. (*Laughter*)

Disciple: N expected intellectual consistency in your views.

Sri Aurobindo: Truth is not always consistent, but the contradiction you see does not mean that there is no responsibility or no morality, no right and wrong. The individual is responsible because he accepts the action of the Gunas.

Disciple: But it is the Cosmic Spirit that makes him accept it, is it not?

Sri Aurobindo: No. The Cosmic Spirit does not act directly. It acts through the Nature. The Cosmic Spirit acts not through the true individuality but through the individual in Nature. It acts through personality and personality is not the person. Personality is something formed of the mental, vital and physical nature. This personality is responsible because it accepts the Gunas through ego and nature. As I said, the Cosmic Spirit works through the nature and not direct.

Disciple: But the Cosmic Spirit works its purpose through the individual, by making him carry out its intention.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, but that does not mean that the individual is not responsible. The Cosmic is and contains both good and evil.

Disciple: Then it is the Cosmic Spirit that is responsible for the evil.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, the Cosmic Spirit is responsible for both good and evil; you can't say it is responsible for one and not the

other. Through both good and evil, Light and Darkness and their struggle in evolution, the Cosmic Spirit works out its purpose.

Disciple: For example, in the Kurukshetra battle, Duryodhana thought that he was in the right. He did not know that he was leading his own family into destruction.

Sri Aurobindo: But the Cosmic Spirit is not in evolution, while the individual is in evolution. The individual progresses in his evolution by his nature, — he evolves through his nature.

Disciple: Can the individual refuse or reject the Gunas?

Sri Aurobindo: Certainly. The individual can refuse to submit to Nature. For example, Arjuna refused to act according to his nature and eighteen chapters of the Gita had to be told to make him fight.

Disciple: Even though the Cosmic Spirit had already slain the warriors, yet Arjuna was asked to be the instrument.

Sri Aurobindo: Real liberation comes when the Purusha awakes and feels himself separate from Nature, not bound by it but free and lord.

Disciple: But generally the Purusha is bound.

Sri Aurobindo: Of course. Usually the Purusha consents to the action of Prakriti but he can withdraw his consent and stand apart. He can be free by getting out of evolution, by being free from the working of ego and nature-personalities.

Disciple: When the freedom of the Purusha is won then it becomes possible for the individual to look beyond the Cosmic Spirit to the Transcendent and act in the Cosmos according to the will of the Transcendent — is it so?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. Instead of being an instrument of ignorant nature you become the instrument of the Divine.

Disciple: Do you mean by the Cosmic Spirit the Impersonal Consciousness?

Sri Aurobindo: No. The Cosmic Spirit is a Personality — but not in the narrow sense of personality; it is both static and dynamic, Saguna and Nirguna, the Nirguna supporting the Saguna.

Disciple: You said that the psychic being also is a personality.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. The psychic being is a Psychic Purusha.

Disciple: Does the psychic being develop from birth to birth?

Sri Aurobindo: It is not the psychic being itself that develops, but it guides the evolution of the individual being by increasing the psychic element in the nature of the individual. It is these personalities in nature that are bound.

Disciple: It is said that the psychic is a spark of the Divine.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes.

Disciple: Then it seems that the function of the psychic being is the same as that of Vedic Agni, who is the leader of the journey?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. Agni is the God of the Psychic and, among the other things it does, it leads the upward journey.

Disciple: How does the psychic carry the personalities formed in this life into another life?

Sri Aurobindo: After death, it gathers its elements and carries them onward to another birth. But it is not the same personality that is born. People easily misunderstand these things, specially when they are put in terms of the mind. The past personality is taken only as the basis but a new personality is put forward. If it was the same personality, then it would act exactly in the same manner and there would be no meaning in that.

Disciple: Does the experience of the Cosmic Spirit correspond to what you have termed the Overmind?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, but you can have the experience of the Cosmic Consciousness on any other level of consciousness also. Generally, you have it on the level of the Higher Mind where you

feel the two aspects, static and dynamic, as separate. But as you go above, you find the Overmind overarches all the other levels and there the two aspects are gathered together and combined in the same consciousness. (*Turning to N*) So you see, Hitler is responsible so long as he does not feel that he is not Hitler.

Disciple: But does he feel that he is responsible?

Sri Aurobindo: He feels that he is responsible not only for himself but for the whole of Germany.

When Hitler began he was not like that. He was considered an amusing crank and nobody took any notice of him. But his latest photograph shows him to be a criminal, he seems to be going down into darkness very fast. It is the Vital Power that gives him his size and greatness. Without its possession he would be a crudely amiable person with some curious hobbies and eccentricities. This possession was possible because the psychic being in him is undeveloped. There is nothing in his being that can resist the Vital Power.

Mussolini has a comparatively better developed psychic and a very strong vital. But in his last photograph he seems to have weakened. Either he is physically unwell or is aging or perhaps he has misused his powers.

Disciple: Hitler feels responsible for all the 'Aryans', whatever that may mean.

Sri Aurobindo: Of course, the only 'Aryans' are the Germans!

To get free of responsibility you must get rid of the ego, that is to say, of the mental and vital and other personalities. It is they who feel the responsibility and bear the consequences.

Disciple: Can one be free if one acts without feeling responsibility?

Sri Aurobindo: You can't get rid of responsibility like that. Even though you may say you are not responsible, you will feel

internally that you are responsible.

You must become free if you want to be free from responsibility. There are three ways, or rather several ways, of attaining that freedom. One is by the separation of Purusha from Prakriti and realising it as free from it. Another is by realising the Self, the Atman or the Spirit, free from the cosmic movement. A third is by the identification with the Transcendent — by realising the Paramatman. You can also have this freedom by merging into the Shunyam through the Buddhistic discipline.

Disciple: In the experience of the first two methods does the Purusha remain the witness?

Sri Aurobindo: Not necessarily. It may be a witness in the first method because the Purusha separates himself from Prakriti and is then the witness not taking part in her action.

But in the second — the realisation of the Self— the Purusha need not be the witness of the universe, or the universal movement. The Self may remain ingathered without witnessing anything. There are many conditions into which the spirit can pass.

A certain kind of Nirvana is necessary even for our Yoga. That is to say, the world must become, in a way, nothing to you, because as it is constituted it is the work of Ignorance. Then only can you enter into and bring into existence the true creation, the world of Truth or Light here.

Disciple: When the Gita says: "You will find the Self in all and all in the Self and then in Me" — what Self does it speak of?

Sri Aurobindo: It is the Brahmic Consciousness. That is to say, you see one Consciousness in all and all contained in the One Self; and then you rise above to the realisation of the One that is both personal and impersonal and is above both.

Disciple: Is it true that men with a spiritual bent are born with Adhikara for it?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes.

Disciple: Can one acquire Adhikara That is to say, if one has not the Adhikara at first, can one get it by some means?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, a man *can* acquire Adhikara. That is what we mean when we say "He is not ready"; and when we say "He can prepare himself" it means he can get the Adhikara.

Disciple: A man can also acquire Adhikara by keeping the company of saints?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, of course.

Disciple: One gets tired by the problems of manifestation!

Sri Aurobindo: Being tired is not enough. One must acquire the power to be free, by moving out of evolution, that is to say, one must get the power to act from beyond the evolution.

Many yogis when they go beyond, into the Spirit or the Cosmic Consciousness, allow Cosmic Nature to act through them without any sense of individual responsibility. They remain concentrated in, or identified with, the Higher Consciousness, and their nature moves sometimes uncontrolled; and you find, like X found, that at times such spiritual men use foul language. Of course, the yogi or the spirit in them is not bound by the rules of decency, that is why they act like Jada, or Pishacha, or Bala, allowing Nature to play freely in them.

When one has attained the Higher Consciousness then, as the Upanishad says, one does not regret: "I did not do that which was good", or "I did this which is evil." It is not that all yogis act that way. But some of them know the reason, or the necessity of why they act at a particular time, in a particular way. Only, they are not bound by their action.

Another difficulty arises because many yogis are bad philosophers, and so they cannot put their experiences in mental terms. But that does not mean that they have no real spiritual

experience. They do not want to acquire intellectual development, for they wanted only to reach a Higher Consciousness and they are satisfied with that. When you look for things the yogi has never tried to have then you get disappointed like the American lady who objected to Ramana Maharshi's spitting and biting his nails. That has nothing to do with his spirituality.

Disciple: Can one say that in the aspect of Pure Being, Consciousness is absent?

Sri Aurobindo: No, even in what you call Pure Being, Consciousness is there, only it is held back, or is inactive so to say; while in Chit that aspect is in front.

Disciple: In these matters using mental terms always creates confusion because, as you have so often said, Sachchidananda is the prime Reality and no part of it can be thought of as separate.

Disciple: The difficulty arises when one has seen many exponents of the different systems of Sadhana. Then one finds great difficulty in choosing between them.

Disciple: But does one always choose these things with the mind?

Disciple: There is no other go. Cannot the study of different systems lead one to Knowledge?

Sri Aurobindo: It *can* help in making an approach to the path of Knowledge. Philosophy is an attempt to explain to the human mind what is really beyond it. But to the Western mind thought is the highest thing — if you can think out an explanation of the universe you have reached the goal of mental activity. They use the mind for the sake of using it — that leads nowhere. (*Turning to N*) So, you see, the universe is not a question of logic but of consciousness.

Disciple: But is the study of philosophy indispensable?

Sri Aurobindo: No, not at all.

Disciple: I would like to know everything by experience.

Sri Aurobindo: You can know what philosophy preaches, or has to say, by direct experience, and by something more which philosophy cannot give.

Disciple: The Sankhya's division between Purusha and Prakriti, in one sense, is very sharp, and so it helps one to get away from the bondage of Prakriti.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, it is categorical. They believe in the two — Purusha and Prakriti, as the final elements. Sankhya and Buddhism were both first understood and appreciated by Europe. Sankhya because of its sharp distinction between Purusha who is consciousness and Prakriti which they believe to be inconscient. According to Sankhya, Prakriti is jada — inconscient, and it is the light of the consciousness of Purusha that makes Prakriti appear conscious. It believes that even Buddhi is jada.

But we in our Yoga need not accept this sharp cleavage between Purusha and Prakriti.

The Europeans like Buddhism for its strong rationalism; its logic leads to Shunyam, the state of non-being, which is its aim. There is also a strong note of agnosticism in Buddhism which appeals to them. It is something that hangs in the air, for the base is Shunyam — you don't know on what basis the whole thing stands.

There is a certain similarity between Science and Sankhya; for in science they believe that evolution begins with the inconscient and goes up the scale of consciousness.

Disciple: We have so much darkness in us that we can't empty it by our own efforts. At times, it seems that even a little light will do!

Sri Aurobindo: No. A little light, a mere candle-like mental illumination, will not do. There must be the full sun-light. And that is very difficult to attain and bring down. It is a slow process, but that is what we mean when we say: "You must have an opening." If you have an opening, gradually more and more light can come in.

Disciple: How can we accept the Light without knowing it is there?

Sri Aurobindo: That means something in you does not want it, otherwise there is hardly any difficulty. Of course, so far as the world is concerned it has always refused to accept the Light when it came. It is a test for knowing whether the world is ready or not. For example, when Christ was sentenced Pilate had the right to pardon one of the four condemned, and he pardoned Barabbas. Nowadays, they say that Barabbas was not a robber, but a national hero, that he was a sort of Robinhood. Whatever that may be, it is a fact that the romantic robber was preferred to the Son of God; or the political opponent to the Teacher of the Truth.

Disciple: You spoke about experience, but I have no experience. All I feel is pressure at the time of meditation.

Sri Aurobindo: You at least feel the pressure.

Disciple: But how to know that it is due to the working of the Higher Power?

Sri Aurobindo: If you can wait you will know yourself, or you have to accept it from the Guru who has gone through the experience — you have to accept it by Sravana, hearing, and then by Manana, meditating upon it.

Disciple: It is said that ascent and descent take place. How to know it?

Sri Aurobindo: You will yourself know it when it takes place; you can't miss it.

♑

24 JANUARY 1939

Sri Aurobindo (*turning to P who usually brought the news of local politics*)**:** Any news?

Disciple: No news except what C gives me. Mahatma Gandhi advised the Japanese visitor Dr. Kagawa to include Shantiniketan and Pondicherry in his itinerary — without seeing these, his visit to India would be incomplete.

Sri Aurobindo: Oh that? I have heard about it.

(*At this juncture the Mother arrived and a short meditation followed. After her departure Sri Aurobindo resumed*.)

Sri Aurobindo: There is some news for you.

Disciple: For me? Let us hear.

Sri Aurobindo: S and B [*both local officials*] have been directed by the French Ministry to return at once to Pondicherry by aeroplane. The Ministry seems to be going against D [*leader of the local party in power*]. D is no longer invulnerable it seems. I don't know why the Minister has suddenly taken this change of attitude.

Disciple: D, I understand — this information was unauthenticated and so I had kept silent — had written to the Minister against S while S was in France. S must have found that out and taken up a definite line of action against D and his party.

Sri Aurobindo: There is a Greek saying that when one becomes too fortunate and too powerful, he becomes insolent and commits excesses, and that strikes against the throne of God and then retribution begins. D ought to have known that.

G [*leader of the former dominant party*] was not like that. He never lost the sense of balance, never pushed things too far. When X [*one of his lieutenants*] asked him to arrest his political opponent he replied, "Ça c'est une mauvaise politique."

Disciple: Hitler also has had a precipitous rise, he can't maintain

the momentum. He can't last very long.

Sri Aurobindo: There is a famous Greek story about Polycrates, the tyrant of Samos. Do you know it?

Disciple: No.

Sri Aurobindo: This tyrant wanted to make friends with another tyrant [*Amasis of Egypt*]. The latter replied: "You are too fortunate. You must sacrifice something or have some little misfortune to compensate for your fortune, otherwise, I can't ally myself with you." Polycrates threw his most precious ring into the sea as a sacrifice to compensate for his fortune. The ring was swallowed by a fish and that fish, caught by a fisherman, was brought to him. He got back the ring. The other tyrant heard about it and said: "You are too lucky. I shall never ally myself with you." Polycrates was afterwards killed by his people who had risen in revolt. 'The ring of Polycrates' is a proverbial expression in English.

The Roman poet says: "The Titans fall by their own mass." There is a similar idea in India when it is said: "The Asuras are too heavy for the earth to bear their weight." But some Asuras are clever enough to flourish in spite of proverbs.

Disciple: Can it be said that the Asuras by their action contradict the law of evolution or that they contradict something fundamental in human nature?

Sri Aurobindo (*after keeping silent for some time*)**:** There is no such general law. The thing is that the Asuras can't keep balance. The law that demands balance then strikes.

Then Sri Aurobindo became silent. After some time, looking at a disciple he said with regard to yesterday's topic: "Is your cosmic problem solved?"

Disciple: Not until I get the experience. But I have some interesting news from Calcutta. M has been telling her relations

such a number of lies that they have found it out and say: "There is truth on both sides."

Sri Aurobindo: But what does she say?

Disciple: She says that the Ashram tried to keep her child because of her property. We are short of money, especially as the new building is being done now, and that police intervention has taken place before also.

Sri Aurobindo: But how can we get the money from her child? Everybody knows that the property belongs to M and she is not going to die within a few years. It is not the Ashram that wanted to keep the child, she wanted to stay of her own accord. And where was the police intervention? By saying that, M deprives herself the credit of having been the first who brought in the police.

Disciple: She says all that to save her face.

Sri Aurobindo: It will take a lot of saving.

(*After a period of silence*)

Disciple: A.B. is supposed to have said that Vivekananda, by his idea of service to humanity, brought in a mixture and spoiled the spirituality that was intended to be cultivated by Ramakrishna.

Sri Aurobindo: In what way?

Disciple: I don't know. Thats all I was told.

Sri Aurobindo: That is not enough. I know nothing about it.

But was it Ramakrishna's idea that Vivekananda followed? Was it Ramakrishna who asked him to do service to humanity?

Disciple: As far as I remember he spoke of *loka hita* — the good of the world.

Sri Aurobindo: But that is not the same as service to humanity. The Gita also asks us to work for the good of the world. *Loka hita* can be done in many ways.

Disciple: So far as I know Ramakrishna did not say anything

like that. In feet, there was a great difference among Ramakrishna's disciples about what Vivekananda was bringing in. But some of them submitted saying: "Vivekananda must know better." The phrase 'Daridra Narayana' was Vivekananda's.

Disciple: But some disciples, even though they did not object, did not take any part in that work. Brahmananda was one. We heard he had a greater realisation than Vivekananda.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, I think so. He was spiritually higher. I once met Brahmananda when I went to see Belur Math. He asked me about some letters received from the Government. I don't remember what it was about. He asked me whether he should do anything or keep quiet. I asked him to keep silent and not give any reply.

Disciple: Ramakrishna Mission seems to be more occupied with social and humanitarian work; I don't know if there is much spirituality in it. My cousin, Swami Adwaitananda, went there and he was quite dissatisfied and came back.

Sri Aurobindo: Plenty of people complain of that. But what work do they do?

Disciple: Medical-relief, famine-relief.

Sri Aurobindo: Famine-relief is not all the year round. Medical-relief is something.

Disciple: Education also.

Disciple: Nowadays in many places they feed the poor as service to Daridra Narayana, — the poor as Narayana. On the birthdays of saints and Yogis there is what Vivekananda called Seva of Daridra Narayana.

Sri Aurobindo: I see no idea in that. What is the use of feeding people for one day, when they have to fast all the year round? You can satisfy your conscience that you have done something for the poor, I suppose. If you could find out the cause of poverty and try

to remove that, then it would be some real work.

Disciple: But that is not easy, Sir. There are so many difficulties, political, economic, etc.

Sri Aurobindo: I don't think it is so insoluble as all that. If you give the people education — by education I mean proper education, not the modern type — and the means, then the problem could be solved. People in England or France have not this kind of poverty as we have in India. That is because of their education — they are not so helpless.

Disciple: About six thousand people were fed on the birthday of Ramana Maharshi. There were so many people on this occasion that they were not allowed to touch him: only to stand at a distance, make pranam or have darshan and go away.

Sri Aurobindo: If they were allowed to touch him, he would have felt like the President of America who had to shake hands with thousands of people and in the end got an aching hand.

Disciple: There are people who give a lot of money for such purposes of temporary utility, but curiously enough, we don't get any. One man actually told me that we didn't require money because we had buildings, etc.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, that is the impression. They think, like the American Lady B, that the Ashram is a work of genius and genius can do without money. (*Laughter*) It is only a minority among the rich who give money; mostly it is the poor that give, like Gracieuse who hardly earns enough to maintain her family yet whenever she finds an opportunity she sends us money. There is a rumour that we have a lot of money stored in Pavitra's cellar! (*Laughter*)

♑

Disciple: Barcelona is going! The French people are waking up at the eleventh hour.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, the democracies are not showing much courage, at present, at any rate.

Disciple: It seems political ideas and ideals are not worth fighting for. Thousands fought for democracy, and now they are in a hurry to give it up! Nothing seems to be permanent in the political field.

Sri Aurobindo: Quite so. All human values are half values — they are relative. They have no permanence or durability about them.

Disciple: Perhaps if men became more mentalised, they would understand things better.

Sri Aurobindo: By being mentalised? No! The difficulty is that men don't follow the principles of life.

Disciple: How is that?

Sri Aurobindo: Life compromises between different elements, but mind, when acting on its own, does not compromise. Mind takes up one thing and makes it absolute, considers it as apart from and opposed to all other things.

Hegel boasted that in Europe they had succeeded in separating reason from life, and you see their philosophy — it has nothing to do with life; it is all mental gymnastics, it does not form part of life. While in India, philosophy has always been a part of life; it has an aim to realise everything.

So also in the political philosophy of Europe you find that if they accept democracy, it is only democracy — all the rest is opposed to it. If monarchy, then it is only monarchy. That is what happened in Greece. They fought for democracy, aristocracy and monarchy, and in the end they were conquered by the Romans.

Disciple: Then what is the truth in all these attempts at political organisation?

Sri Aurobindo: If you want to arrive at something true and lasting, you have to look at life and learn from it, that is to say, you must learn the nature of the oppositions and contradictions and then reconcile them.

As regards government, life shows that there is a truth in monarchy — whether hereditary or elective, there is a man at the top who governs. Life also shows that there is a truth in aristocracy, whether it is of strong men, or rich men, or intellectuals. The current fiction is that it is the majority that rules, but the fact is that it is the minority, the aristocracy. Life also shows that the rule of the king or the aristocracy should be with the consent, silent or vocal, of the people.

In ancient India, they recognised the truth of these things. That is why India has lasted through millenniums — and China also.

English politics is successful because they have always found one man or two who had the power to lead the minority which is the ruling class. During the Victorian period, it was either Gladstone or Disraeli. And even when the party in power changes, the other party that comes to power does not change things radically. They continue the same policy with a slight modification.

In France no government lasts. Sometimes it changes within a few days! The new government is a repetition of the one it replaces. Blum was one who wanted to do something radical but he was knocked out.

Disciple: Did you see Subhas's statement?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. He seems to have a queer logic: Because the rightists have a majority so the President should be from the leftists! And what is the sense in saying, "We will fight to the end"? I can understand that kind of opposition if you are going to have a revolution, then there can be no compromise. But once you have

accepted compromise, there is no meaning in such statements. One has to work on the basis of what one has gained. Satyamurty's idea of federation seems all right to me. If the States' people are given some representation in the Centre and the Viceroy exercises no veto, then it would practically amount to Home Rule.

Disciple: The Viceroy's long stay in Bombay seems significant. I think there is something behind it. Perhaps he wants to make Dr. Kher or Rajagopalachari head of the Central Assembly in a Federation.

Sri Aurobindo: Is that so? Kher seems to be a very able man. He seems to have escaped the 'socialist trap'.

Disciple: Vallabhbhai is terribly anti-socialist. He crushed the socialists at Ahmedabad.

Sri Aurobindo: These socialists don't know what Socialism is.

Disciple: There were many humorous speeches in the Sindh Assembly. The Muslim League has been exposed.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. The Sindh Premier — I always forget his name — seems to be a strong man and stands up for ideas at the risk of unpopularity. That means some strength. The Sindh Muslims were anxious to join the Congress. The Congress should try to do something to make a coalition there. Congress ministries are successful everywhere. That shows the capacity to govern if the powers are given.

Disciple: Only Bengal and the Punjab remain now under the Muslim League.

Sri Aurobindo: The League is not so strong in Bengal — they have the Praja Party there. In Punjab, Sikandar Hayat Khan seems to be an able man. Only in U.P. the League seems strong. If Congress could win in Sindh then the Bengal and Punjab premiers will stand on two sides of India and make faces at each other.

Disciple: I wonder how Fazlul Huq could become a premier.

Nazimuddin seems more capable.

Sri Aurobindo: Nazimuddin can't make a popular figure. Huq can turn as circumstances require. All these Muslims of the League seem to be a lot of self-seekers.

Disciple: The League is losing its strength now. Gandhi has definitely said that any compromise with it is impossible now.

Sri Aurobindo: I don't understand why then the Congress has opened negotiations with the League; it is being given undue importance. How is it that the Congress is so weak in Punjab?

Disciple: Because of the Socialists and the old Congress people fighting each other. The Jaipur affair seems to be starting again. Bajaj is going to offer Satyagraha; it seems the Mahatma has given his approval.

Sri Aurobindo: Since he is a Congressman I suppose Congress will have to back him. If the States' people get power, the Princes will have no work but to sign papers and hunt animals. The Gaekwad will have to stop making buildings.

Disciple: Where will they shoot? The forests are being destroyed nowadays.

Sri Aurobindo: The forests have to be preserved, otherwise the animals will become extinct. China has lost her forests and there are floods every year.

Disciple: There are so many maharajas, chieftains, nawabs all over India.

Sri Aurobindo: Germany was like that at one time. Napoleon swept away half of them and the last war swept off the other half. Japan also had many Princes but they voluntarily abdicated their powers for the sake of duty to the country.

Disciple: How far back in history do they go?

Sri Aurobindo: The Mikado claims to be the descendant of the Sun Goddess. The Mikado named Maigi believed that and used to

do what was necessary after feeling the inspiration within him. There are two types of features among the Japanese: tall people with a long nose and a fine aristocratic face; they are said to have come from Australia and Polynesia. It is they who gave the Samurai culture to Japan; I met at Tagore's place a painter of this type, he had magnificent features. The other is the usual Mongolian type.

Disciple: The dictators psychology is an authority-complex. People under the dictator feel that they are great and that the dictator — in this case Hitler — is fighting for them, not they who fight for him. Perhaps the dictators find a competitor in God and religion. So they try to crush religion.

Sri Aurobindo: But Mussolini didn't, — though Kamal and Stalin did. Mussolini on the contrary has given more power to the Pope and the Vatican. He has practically recognised the Roman Catholic Church as the State religion.

Disciple: I read in a newspaper that Kamal, in an intoxicated condition, slapped an Egyptian because he came to a dinner party with a fez on.

Sri Aurobindo: You haven't heard the story of a journalist?

Disciple: No.

Sri Aurobindo: Well, a young journalist of Turkey criticised the goverment, saying, "Turkey is governed by a number of drunkards." Kamal came to know of it and sent him an invitation to dinner. After the dinner was over Kamal told him: "Young man, you have written that 'Turkey is governed by a number of drunkards.' It is not 'a number of drunkards', but just one drunkard."

Disciple: Kamal once tried to play off Italy against Russia.

Sri Aurobindo: But Russia has all along helped Turkey.

Disciple: Stalin forced the collectivisation of farming among the Ukranians. The farmers did not like it. So, to spite the government

they collected from the farms only what they required for themselves for the year; they did not collect the crop for the government. Stalin came to know about it. In the meantime the crop standing in the fields was destroyed by cold and frost. He sent down his officials and they attached the corn collected by the farmers as State dues. The result was famine. The farmers starved and died by the thousands. Stalin did not help; he allowed them to die. He was afraid that once he submitted to them there would be no collectivisation anywhere.

Sri Aurobindo: That is what happens when Socialism comes. Communism is different. If they had been successful in carrying out the original idea of the Soviets then it would have been a great success. Mussolini at first tried to form a corporate State but he gave it up.

Disciple: The Socialists did not succeed in breaking up the trade-unions in Ahmedabad, which are under the Congress. The Indian farmer also won't accept the Socialists.

Sri Aurobindo: Socialism has no chance with the Indian peasant. He will side with you so long as you promise him land and help to end the landlord system. But once he has got the land no more Socialism for him. In Socialism you have the State which intervenes at every step with its officials who rob your money.

Disciple: They know the government machinery and they manage to keep the power in their hands.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. It is the State bureaucracy that dictates the policy irrespective of the good of the commune. In Communism they hold the land as the common property of the whole community — that is, the whole unit, and each one in it is entitled to labour and to have his share from the produce.

In India we had a kind of communism in the villages. The whole village was like a big family and the lowest had his right as a member of the family. The washerman, the carpenter, the

blacksmith, the barber, all got what they needed.

Each such commune can be independent and many such units can be scattered all over the country and they can combine or coordinate their activities for a common purpose.

♑

28 JANUARY 1939

The Mother left for the general meditation and the disciples were ready to begin some topic, but Sri Aurobindo seemed pre-occupied with something. He was rather thoughtful and in a mood of silence. So none ventured to begin. After a few minutes Sri Aurobindo looked at the company present and there was a spontaneous smile on every face.

Disciple: P seems to have some news.

Sri Aurobindo: Then why doesn't he spurt it out?

Disciple: There is nothing particular today.

Sri Aurobindo: There is a cure for your cold in the *Sunday Times*: you have to get into an aeroplane, take some rounds, get down and you are cured.

Disciple: Permanently?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, if the plane comes down with a crash, the cure would be permanent. (*Laughter*)

Disciple: One friend V used to put a cotton string into his nose for his cold.

Disciple: That is a Hathayogic process.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. They also insert a long piece of cloth into their intestines and bring it out through the anus in order to clean the track.

Disciple: Is it possible?

Sri Aurobindo: There is no question of its being possible, it is actually done. And there have been authentic cases of taking poisons like nitric acid, hydrocyanic acid, etc., without any evil effect. There are also cases of swallowing nails, glass, etc.

Disciple: I wonder how the scientists would explain all this. Once they were invited to a demonstration but they refused to attend.

Disciple: They can't attend, for fear of their convictions being shaken.

Disciple: These Hathayogis must know some process of preventing absorption of these poisons.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, they have the power to stop the action of the poisons and to eliminate them. They have to throw it out by some process immediately after the demonstration.

Disciple: Perhaps you know that the Royal Society of Science refused permission to Sir William Crooks who wanted to demonstrate the reality of mediumistic phenomena.

Sri Aurobindo: The same thing happened in Germany. In one village [*Alberfeltz*] there was a man who used to train horses to do mathematical sums. He invited the scientists. Not only did they refuse to believe it, they complained to the Government that it should be stopped because the trainer was following a scientifically unorthodox method.

Disciple: Maurice Maeterlinck went to see it and said that he himself did not believe it before he saw it. He examined the animals by giving his own figures and the answers given by the horses were correct. [*Ref. his book 'L'hôte inconnu'*.]

Sri Aurobindo: They say animals can't think or reason. It is not true. Their intelligence has been made to act in the narrow limits of life, according to their needs. So these faculties have not been

developed, thats all.

The cats have a language of their own. They utter different kinds of mews for different purposes; for instance, when the mother leaves her kittens behind a box and mews in a particular tone and rhythm, the kittens understand that they are not to move from there till she comes back and repeats that mew. It is through tone and rhythm that they express themselves.

Even the donkey who is supposed to be very stupid is unusually clever. Some horses and donkeys were confined together within an enclosure and the gate was closed to find out if they could get out. It was found that while the horses were helpless, it was a donkey that by turning the latch opened the gate.

Why go so far? Even in our Ashram, the Mother's cat Chikoo was unusually clever. One day she was confined in a room and it was discovered that she was trying to open the window in exactly the same way as the Mother used to do. Evidently she had watched her doing it before.

We had a dog, a bitch, left by somebody in the first house we rented. There was a room upstairs with glass windows and a bathroom at one extremity. One day she found herself locked out. She tried all sorts of things to enter the room but could not as the door and the windows were closed. When all attempts failed, she sat down in front of a window and began to think, "How to get in ?" The way she sat and the attitude of her sitting showed clearly that she was thinking. Then suddenly she got up as if saying, "Ah, there's the bathroom door! Let me try it." She went in that direction; the door was open and she got in.

It is the Europeans who make a big difference between man and animal. The only difference is animals can't form a concept, can't read or write or philosophise. (*Laughter*)

Disciple: But they can't do yoga.

Sri Aurobindo: I don't know that. Once, while the Mother and

myself were meditating a cat happened to be present. We found that she was getting queer and was getting into trance and was almost on the point of death, but recovered. Evidently she was trying to receive something.

Disciple: Ramana Maharshi's cow, Laxmi, is said to bow down to him. She is supposed to have been a disciple in her previous life and was attached to him.

Disciple (*referring to the practice of milking cows by beguiling them with dummy calves*)**:** You say animals are intelligent, but this does not show that.

Sri Aurobindo: All men too are not intelligent!

(*Someone said Gandhi severely condemned this practice saying that drinking cow's milk is equal to drinking the calf's blood, for it starves the calf*)

Disciple: But he himself drinks goat's milk!

Sri Aurobindo: It is like going in trains and cars and yet condemning them.

Disciple: Vallabhbhai knows him very well. That is why he asked Gandhi not to come to Bardoli at all when the Satyagraha campaign was started there with Vallabhbhai in full command.

Sri Aurobindo: He feared Gandhi would stop the movement if it didn't conform strictly to his principles.

(*The talk turned to the Rajkot affair. P related the substance of the correspondence between the Thakore and Patel, and the instrumentation of the Dewan and others in helping the Thakore to retract from the agreed terms. Then he recounted the story of the suicide of Ranjit Singh who was insulted by the Viceroy in the Chamber of Princes*.)

Sri Aurobindo: When is the Government going to inaugurate the Federation?

Disciple: Early part of 1940. That is why they are trying their best to bring the Congress into the settlement.

Sri Aurobindo: That is too early. They have hardly a year and within such a short period they have to rope in the Princes and come to terms with the Congress.

Disciple: Congress can prevent the federation by refusing to send its representative. And if the States join it can take up the Federation, as there will be only the Muslim minority to deal with. Bhulabhai Desai went to England so many times with the ostensive reason of health but really, it seems, to discuss the Federation problem. He likes to remain behind the scene.

Sri Aurobindo: I also like to work from behind; I sympathise with him. But the Nizam won't give in so easily. If the major States come in, the small ones don't matter.

Disciple: Vallabhbhai is trying to appeal to the Gaekwad, telling him that he (the Gaekwad) was the first to think of self-government and has always been thinking of advancing political life, etc.

Sri Aurobindo: He will think for thirty years more before he gives in. But who knows, he may give in. Since he is old he may take the glory and give the legacy of trouble to his successor.

Disciple: The States have tried more than once to come together and act in concert but haven't been able to do it yet. Patiala and Bikaner tried separately but don't seem to have succeeded.

♑

29 JANUARY 1939

Sri Aurobindo (*to P*)**:** Have you read the report of Hitler's interview with Colonel Beck in the *Sunday Times*?

Disciple: No. What is it about?

Disciple: Shouting at each other?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. It is said that when Hitler begins to shout

his eyes become glassy and it means disaster. But in this interview when he began to shout and his eyes turned glassy, Beck began to shout louder. Hitler was much surprised to find this unexpected response and himself toned down.

Disciple: In the end he has met his match!

Disciple: And what was the result of the interview?

Sri Aurobindo: Relations with Poland were not much improved, I suppose.

Have you seen Subhas's statement?

Disciple: Yes, it seems unfortunate that at this time the Congress should be divided.

Sri Aurobindo: Quite so. Whenever he has been in authority there has been trouble. The Congress split in Bengal came in his time. He seems to be a mere intellectual without grasp of the realities. He talks of India exerting international influence! You are not even a nation and you talk of being international! You have to be first independent. Even in a small affair like the China-Japanese war, what you have been able to do is to send an ambulance unit.

Disciple: Our A who was in Bengal politics does not have a very high opinion of Bose. He says, he is a good lieutenant but can't be a great leader.

Sri Aurobindo: That has been my impression all along.

Disciple: It seems as if what he is doing is more for ambition and power and egoism.

Disciple: And all the talk about influencing the voters is meaningless. They are all trying to influence the voters to their side.

Sri Aurobindo: Quite so. He says he stands for principles, but all the time he is indirectly saying, "Vote for me."

Disciple: But he is very sincere and honest.

Disciple: Many leaders are that.

Disciple: Not in Bengal — they are almost all dishonest.

Sri Aurobindo: What do you mean by sincerity? Ready to suffer for the cause, and to accept no bribe, is it not? But even during our Swadeshi movement, though the leaders were egoistic and quarrelsome, they were honest and sincere. Our fight was over principles, reform or revolution, or as someone put it, colonial self-government or Independence. We never fought on personal grounds as you now find between Bose and Sen Gupta or Khare and Shukla. You know what Das said about politicians? He said that in his whole legal career he had not met worse types of criminals than in politics.

Disciple: But if Bose sincerely believes that the Congress is going to compromise with the Government on Federation, is he not justified in fighting for that in the Congress? He says that some suspicious negotiations seem to be going on behind the scenes.

Sri Aurobindo: But what is there objectionable in negotiations? Every country and every big party has to do it. The Germans before and during the war were doing it. Negotiation does not mean acceptance. There is no harm in seeing how far the other party will go in granting concessions, rights and privileges.

Disciple: When Nehru visited Nahas Pasha in Egypt, Nahas said that their Wafd party had become demoralised after accepting office and now they are defeated. He wondered how the Congress ministers have remained pure after accepting office. Nehru explained to him about the Parliamentary Board which acts as a check on the Ministers. The Board has no administrative powers and Ministers are not members of the Board.

Sri Aurobindo: I was surprised to hear about the dissolution of the Wafd party and wondered what it might have been due to; so that was the cause then. But then they ought to have turned out the king, as Kamal did in Turkey. The present king is following the policy of his father. So, instead of quarrelling among themselves

they should have — now that they have power — tried to build up their nation first, by giving people education and training. Secondly, by increasing the wealth, and lastly, by building up military power. The same thing should be done in India by the Congress ministry.

Disciple: What sort of education? Technical?

Sri Aurobindo: Technical, agricultural and other. Without properly educated and trained people, how will they develop industries etc.? India is such a vast country that she can produce all her own necessary things. External trade is not necessary at the beginning. That is what the U.S.A. did. She developed first her internal trade to meet all the necessities of her own people; and when by that means she had increased her wealth she began to develop external trade. The government should have a plan for the economic survey of the provinces to see what are the products necessary for consumption in India.

Disciple: That is one good thing Bose has done; he has organised an economic planning committee.

Sri Aurobindo: But they must not neglect secondary education. You can't have efficient people without education. It creates common interest and a basis of common understanding. I don't mean the present form of education — that is not at all suitable for building a nation, it has to be radically changed. Indian boys are more intelligent than English boys but three-fourths of their talent and energy are wasted, while the English boys use their talent ten times better than the Indian because of the training and equipment.

Disciple: The Bombay Premier has approached the merchants for donations to his government as there is a substantial loss of revenue due to prohibition. He told them that if they didn't donate, new taxation would have to be levied.

Sri Aurobindo: It is better not to destroy the capitalist class as the socialists want to. They are the source of national wealth. They

should be encouraged to spend for the nation. Taxing is all right, but you must increase production, start new industries, and raise the standard of living. Without all that, if you merely increase the taxes there will be a state of depression. Other nations can tax enormously because they produce also on a large scale.

Disciple: Kher is now opening agricultural schools in villages and cottage industry schools — that is to say, carrying out the Wardha Scheme.

Sri Aurobindo: It is a pity to give up all that work for merely fighting the idea of Federation. You can fight it even after the Federation is established. One has to accept what one gets and on that basis work out the rest. If the British Government finds that the Federation is perfectly worked out, it may not object to give more. They expect a crowd of demagogues shouting together in the Assembly, not people capable of governing. But if Socialism comes that might frighten them.

Disciple: The present governor of Bombay seems to be sympathetic to Kher's cabinet.

Sri Aurobindo: The English people have a constitutional temperament, except of course, a few autocrats like Curzon. They will be violently opposed to their being kicked out, but they don't object to their being gently shouldered out as they have been in the Dominions. The Dominions are practically independent. The British will be quite content if they get India's help in case of an international war. But these declarations of anti-imperialist policy and "no compromise" etc., will tend to stiffen their attitude. What is the use of declaring your policy in advance? Even as regards the Princes one must not be too exacting in one's demands. They won't tolerate the idea of reducing them to mere figureheads from the very beginning.

Disciple: Vallabhbhai is a very capable man, but he is not liked even by his own colleagues.

Sri Aurobindo: He may not seem to be a very likable person. But if one has sincerity and capacity that is enough in politics.

Vithalbhai seems more pleasant. He is more of a statesman and he has done work in the Council.

FEBRUARY-MAY 1939

3 FEBRUARY 1939

A letter from a sadhika was read to Sri Aurobindo in which she related some experiences which came to her at the beginning of her taking up the Yoga: losing consciousness, the mind floating about as it were, lightning strokes in the head, and a feeling of some Presence. But these experiences gave her great fear and she complained of bad health.

Sri Aurobindo: You can tell her that what she calls losing of consciousness is its movement inwards. It is rather unusual to get these experiences at the outset. Usually, one takes months and months to make the mind quiet and she did it at the first sitting. The lightning strokes is the action of the Higher Power or Yoga Shakti, to make the Adhar fit for Yoga. All these things show that she has capacity for the Yoga. But she must get rid of fear. Otherwise, all the experiences will stop. The letter shows that her inner mind is ready but her vital and the physical are not — one is full of fear and the other suffers from bad health, as she herself says. This produces a conflict in the being which is not desirable. It may be better for her not to take up Yoga seriously until she has restored her health.

But the most important thing is to get rid of fear.

Disciple: But how to get rid of it?

Sri Aurobindo: That is the difficulty many complain of. When one takes up Yoga all sorts of experiences come which are out of the run of ordinary consciousness; and if one fears, Yoga is not possible. It has to be got rid of by the mind, by psychological training and will-power. Any human being worth the name has a will and it has to be exercised or developed. She can ask for the protection of the Divine, lay herself in the hands of the Divine. As Vivekananda very insistently said, the Yogi must be *abhīḥ*, without fear.

I don't know whether I told you about my experience. Once, after my meeting with Lele, I was meditating at Calcutta. I felt a tremendous calm and then felt as if my breath would stop. A silly fear, or rather an apprehension, caught hold of me and I said: "If my breath stops how shall I live?" At once the experience stopped and never came back again.

There are all sorts of experiences. What will you do if you feel your head being drilled, as if a nail were being thrust inside?

Disciple: Why cant the experiences come quietly?

Sri Aurobindo: The experiences come quietly but you make a row! If your physical head or body is being split then you could object to it. You ought to know by now that all these experiences are in the subtle body.

Disciple: I had also once or twice such fear of a Presence as the lady speaks of. As soon as I sat to meditate before going to bed at about midnight I felt everything still, and as if there was some Presence. That frightened me.

Sri Aurobindo: Why? You thought it was the Devil that brought the stillness? But the Devil usually makes a row. Two things are necessary in Yoga: to get rid of fear and to know the ordinary symbols.

(*Turning to P*) You know Velji, once in meditation, saw some golden beings coming down and telling him, "Now we will cut up your body and make it new." He cried out: "Never, never." He thought that his physical body was going to be cut. But the symbolism is quite clear: the old elements in his nature would be thrown away and new ones brought in.

Disciple: I was surprised to hear that afterwards he turned to Jainism.

Sri Aurobindo: Was he Jain by birth?

Disciple: Yes.

Sri Aurobindo: Well, that often happens. In one's vital and physical nature there remains a stamp of one's ancestral religion and it comes out some times. The Christians usually turn towards Catholicism. A Frenchman, I forgot his name, tried all sorts of things, mysticism, Tibetan occultism, etc., and came into touch with our Pavitra who told him that these things wont go with Yoga. He abandoned all connections and turned to Catholicism. He wrote a book afterwards, stealing passages from Pavitra's letters and using them in support of Catholicism. It was that that disgusted Pavitra.

My grandfather started by being a Brahmo and ended by writing a book on Hinduism and proclaiming it as the best religion in the world.

(*After a pause, turning to P*) So Subhas has met Nehru.

Disciple: Yes, Nehru may act as a mediator and Tagore may be the peace-maker between the two parties.

Sri Aurobindo: Subhas speaks of direct action after six months. But what sort of direct action? It seems Gandhi will leave him to form his own working committee; it will be a great blunder if Gandhi did that. And with Gandhi left out, what direct action can Subhas take? Will he and his followers take off their coats and fight? or reject seats in the Assembly? Salt Satyagraha is out of the question. Breaking laws? But then the Government will bring in the Moderates and rule through them so long as you don't send better men! No-tax campaign? But that is a tremendous affair. Gandhi himself says the country is not ready for it. I don't think Subhas has so much influence or capacity to make it successful as an all-India movement. Neither does he himself believe in nonviolence. His followers don't seem to know their own minds.

Disciple: Tagore wants Subhas to compromise with Gandhi, for he knows that Gandhi is an international figure.

Sri Aurobindo: Not only that, his word counts. He hasn't lost that force yet. I think if he made a public statement that he wants

Pattabhi to be elected, he would have him elected. But there are still six months to inaugurate the Federation; what is Subhas going to do in the meantime? Gandhi knew that Subhas will take up this attitude and hence he did not want him. Now with his followers left out of the working committee, the leftists will probably pass laws abolishing zamindars and capitalists and spoil the work done by the Ministers. They will try to introduce social legislations and that would make the Governors use their powers, or, if they keep out of the assemblies, it would be foolish to throw away the powers given. Before I left politics, I had written: If you get real power, take it and fight for more. Like De Valera, who took what was given and grabbed at more. In the present international situation when the Government wants to come to a compromise with the Congress you should accept what they give. Accept the Federation and fight against it afterwards.

Disciple: That seems to be Subhas's opinion, but he says: Now is the time to press for independence.

Sri Aurobindo: That would be all right if the country was prepared for revolution, so that even if he and a few others were hanged the movement could go on and ultimately the Government would have to yield as in Ireland. There, the lives of the people who went against the Government were not safe. If one is not prepared for that then one has to proceed in subtler ways. But what Bose claims now is impossible to get. It will only set the Government against you and they will try to crush the movement.

Disciple: But if they work this provincial programme and prepare the country at the same time, and press the States to give rights to the people, then we might get what we want without revolution.

Sri Aurobindo: Exactly. It is a clever drive to bring in the States question, and if they can carry it through, the Federation with the Princes will break down and only the Muslim question will remain. Subhas has not done a wise thing.

Disciple: People are severely criticising Gandhi's statement.

Sri Aurobindo: Only the leftists are doing that. No right-wing man has said anything except S. C. Das.

(*A long pause of silence*)

The British people have one weakness: they can't drive things to the extreme. They can't go on like some other nations with methods of suppression for a long time. They have their prestige to keep before the world and they want popular support. So they come in the end to a compromise. France also comes to a compromise, but takes a longer time. But Germany or Italy don't hesitate to go to the extreme limit. For instance, in Palestine, the British Government had almost succeeded in crushing the terrorists. If they had persisted they could have easily put Nahashiby against the Mufti and ruled the Arabs by the Arabs. But they could not go on and now they have called the Palestine Conference. If the Mufti is clever he will be able to get as much as possible, but not the whole of it. In Ireland also the British came to a compromise; even the Conservatives turned round. France gave in in Syria, but the Syrians had to fight for it after the last war. In Tunisia, they have put the Destourians in prison, but if they can keep up, France will give in.

Disciple: Roosevelt seems to have declared for democracy. In that case the three powers combined may stem the tide of the dictators.

Disciple: Now Hitler will think twice before he tries to do anything.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, if he is capable of thinking. His inner voice may ask him to push on. Mussolini may think twice unless he is too Hitlerised. In that case Hitler will say: "I have given you a chance for the colonies. If you don't take it up I will go to the Ukraine." Mussolini may not like that. But Hitler also may not come to war: during the Czech crisis, it was by mere bluff that he succeeded. He

knew from private sources that England and France wouldn't fight.

Disciple: Roosevelt has promised France armaments and the U.S.A. is selling aeroplanes and other materials. That would mean they may come to her help if she is attacked.

Sri Aurobindo: But it is doubtful if he can carry the nation with him. The armaments are increased for Americas own defence, and if they are exported people may think it will involve them in a war. At any rate, his speech has come as a great blow to both Italy and Germany. Chamberlain also may think of supporting France now. A remarkable man, this Roosevelt, he is very bold and ready to experiment and take risks. It is the old Roosevelt blood, only the first Roosevelt was Fascist. This one is more refined.

Disciple: Jean Herbert says that there may not be any war after all.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, if the British and the French people go on yielding to the demands of the dictators. The British may say to Germany: "We will supply you raw materials, you can come and settle here."

Disciple (*to another disciple*)**:** Have you seen that Hidayatullah has become a Minister of Sindh?

Disciple: Has he? Allah Bux has won him over, it means. From leader of the opposition to a Minister. He made a lot of money from the Sukkur Barrage Scheme during his ministry in Bombay, before the Congress government.

Sri Aurobindo: How?

Disciple: He used to sell plots of land to customers through his agents and kept some of the best ones for himself. There were similar charges against some Ministers in the Central Provinces.

Disciple: Though people bitterly criticize the High Command, it has done a good job.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. It is the High Command and Gandhi's

dictatorship that has kept the country together. This sort of corruption may be found in America and even in France, but you will not find it in England. The public life there is honest and sincere. They may tell lies and may break their promises, but bribery or appropriation of money hardly exists in their public or political administration. As they say, "These things are not done." If a political leader does that sort of thing he is finished for life. Thomas, you know, is wiped out, nobody hears of him now. The judges make no distinction between a rich criminal and a poor one.

♑

5 FEBRUARY 1939

Disciple: Herbert's wife, Lizelle, is collecting Nivedita's letters for a book that she is writing on Nivedita. In one of them, Nivedita mentions that you gave her the charge of editing the *Bande Mataram* after you left Calcutta.

Sri Aurobindo: No. It was the *Karmayogin*. You can tell her that. There is no harm now in saying it, as it was a long time ago. I saw Nivedita before I left Calcutta for Chandernagore. It was from her that I got the news of my contemplated arrest. She had many friends in government circles. Then I published my political will — that stopped the arrest.

Disciple: It seems Nivedita travelled to India, in 1910 or 1911, under an assumed name to evade arrest.

Sri Aurobindo: She died in Darjeeling; she did not die under an assumed name.

(*After a pause*) We were talking about Jainism yesterday. Isn't it to transcend Nature and to conquer it that they do these violent tapasyas, and not from an idea of world-illusion?

Disciple: Yes, that is their idea.

Sri Aurobindo: Then their aim seems to be the same as ours; only their method is different.

Disciple: But that does not explain Lajpat Rai's idea of the illusion of all action.

Sri Aurobindo: No, it doesn't. The idea may have been in his blood or perhaps in the atmosphere of the place. In England, when I was reading Max Muller's translation of the Vedanta, I came upon the idea of Atman, the Self, and thought that this was the true thing to be realised in life. Before that I was an agnostic and even an atheist. How do you explain that? You can't say that it was in the atmosphere of the place. It was in the blood or perhaps carried from a past life. And the curious thing is that as soon as I set foot on Apollo Bunder the experience of the Self began — I did not know, of course, that it was the experience of the Self. It was a sense of calm and vastness pervading everywhere.

Then there is contact with a place which gives you an experience, and sometimes the experience is appropriate to the place. For instance, the sense of the Infinite I had at the Shankaracharya Hill in Kashmir, and at the Parvati Hills in Poona, and the reality of the Goddess in the Karnali temple near Chandod.

Disciple: I asked Herbert why the Jews are so much persecuted in Germany. He says what you said that they are a rich minority and so they are made the scapegoat. He said the same thing was done in France against the aristocracy during the revolution, and in Spain against the clergy.

Sri Aurobindo: That comparison with France and Spain cannot be made. In France the Revolution was not against the aristocracy particularly but against the whole history of the past. And in Spain it is against the past repression by the Church.

Disciple: I asked Lizelle about the conditions in Switzerland since she is Swiss. She says the country is passing through a critical time. She fears that in case of war the passage may be through

Switzerland. During the last war they passed some anxious days fearing Germany would pass through Switzerland. When Belgium was made the route, they felt relieved.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, if the dictators decide to take any course of action, it may be through Switzerland.

Disciple: She says Switzerland is divided into three parts, speaking three languages — Italian, German and French. If they attack the Italian and German speaking cantons, the French cantons would be in trouble.

Sri Aurobindo: It is said that the Czechoslovakian frontier was so strongly fortified that Germany would have found it difficult to take it.

Disciple: It is a pity they gave in without fight. But now Hitler is asking for equivalent colonies.

Sri Aurobindo: From whom? Where?

Disciple: From Belgium, Holland and Portugal.

Sri Aurobindo: Holland has no colonies in Africa. The Portuguese colonies in Africa are small and Hitler would hardly be satisfied with them. Belgian Congo is big, but England would not dare to do anything with it, for that will make Belgium furious and she may side with Germany. England could not allow that, for if Germany takes possession of Antwerp, it will be a pistol at the heart of England.

(*Turning to P*) Roosevelt has backed out. I thought that in his message to the Congress he had taken up the cause of the democracies, but now he says that America has nothing to do with European problems.

Disciple: It may be the financial interests that are behind this.

Disciple: What do you think of Subhas's statement?

Sri Aurobindo: He is hedging. *The Hindu* has given a fitting reply. Either he meant something or meant nothing by his

declaration.

Disciple: The Socialists can't proceed constitutionally. In a recent meeting at Bombay, they began to shout and continued shouting.

Sri Aurobindo: Shouting is quite constitutional with them. (*Laughter*)

♑

7 FEBRUARY 1939

Disciple: Bose has called his leftist Conference. I wonder what programme they are going to formulate.

Sri Aurobindo: That is what they are not going to say. The only thing they are going to do is to give an ultimatum to the British Government. After that they will break some laws or ask the Ministers to resign on the States' issue, if they have not done so by that time.

Disciple: The States' question will be an all-absorbing matter and the split in the Congress may be avoided.

Sri Aurobindo: But it is not definite what the Princes will do. They are under the thumb of the British Government. Only people like Holkar and Nabha may side with the Congress and risk losing their thrones. And there is also this threatened split in the Congress between Subhas and his socialists and Gandhi's followers.

Socialism is now a waning force everywhere — only in England, Scandinavia, France and Mexico it has some hold. English socialism is a watery affair, there is no difference in their policy from the others. And there are only a few hundred communists there. In France, the socialists have lost their chance. Now, only if they can bring about a revolution they may rise, but I don't think it is likely to be successful.

Disciple: In Russia some signs of freedom are noticeable.

Sri Aurobindo: That is because Stalin has killed all those unpleasant to him. He can now wait till some other people come up in the future whom he can kill.

Disciple: Spain seems to be finished.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes.

Disciple: But Madrid remains and General Miaja is there.

Sri Aurobindo: When Barcelona has fallen Miaja cannot do anything. Besides, what can he do without arms and food?

Disciple: Mussolini does not intend to remove the troops from Spain.

Sri Aurobindo: That is what he said the other day.

Disciple: It was Gayda who said that.

Sri Aurobindo: Gayda is the mouthpiece of Mussolini. When he does not want to say anything himself he speaks through Gayda. But Daladier could make a Spanish legion out of the Spanish refugees as a counter-blast to Mussolini's Italian legion in Spain and use it in case the French troops are not allowed to come from Morocco. But it is too bold a policy for Daladier.

Disciple: The French Chamber voted unanimously against the Italian demand for colonies.

Sri Aurobindo: That, of course; when somebody comes to take hold of a family possession, the family will unanimously refuse.

Disciple: But I wonder how Flandin supports the Fascists.

Sri Aurobindo: He will be lynched if he talks of parting with Tunisia, Corsica, etc. If it is a question of parting with some deserts in Africa, the French people may agree, as they wanted to do during the Abyssinian war, but Mussolini will say he is not a collector of deserts.

Disciple: But Italy is sure to push her claims again.

Disciple: Hitler has advised him to keep quiet now.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, till Franco's victory is complete.

Disciple: Bonnet, it seems, wanted to come to a compromise.

Sri Aurobindo: He is not reliable. Daladier has at least some force. On one occasion he refused to listen to Bonnet and said he would not tolerate any English interference in connection with the Italian question. The French people don't know that they have to stand up to the British and speak to them bluntly. During the Czech crisis when Chamberlain told them that he would help them diplomatically as far as possible but they should not count on his military support, they should have replied that if England was attacked by Germany they should not count on them as allies. Then Chamberlain would have come down.

♑

9 FEBRUARY 1939

Dr. R stayed up to 9:30 p.m. As soon as he left the topic of local politics was brought in.

Disciple: The Governor has invited the three parties to see if a compromise can be arrived at. He says they may have their own political views, but they must not go on killing each other.

Sri Aurobindo: He will be one of the greatest diplomats in the world if he can reconcile their interests and have a common programme.

Disciple: Subhas and his Conference don't seem to have settled on any programme. Today's paper says that Gandhiji wired to him not to stand for the presidentship. But he did not pay any heed to it. Now many delegates may vote against him.

Sri Aurobindo: The only thing he speaks of is challenging the

Government and attacking the States — rather a tall order.

Disciple: Yes. Gandhiji also challenged the Government, the result was the Round Table Conference. In the end, Willingdon arrested him and refused even to see him.

Sri Aurobindo: Willingdon will now look with queer eyes at the Congress Ministers and think that all he had done has been undone.

Disciple: The Congress Working Committee has decided to give Subhas the committee of his choice. But the people he has called at Calcutta for a conference don't seem too promising.

(*In the evening the names were read out to Sri Aurobindo*.)

Sri Aurobindo: Who are these people? They seem to be an army of nobodies. Except Aiyangar, Aney, and one or two others these people were never heard of before.

Disciple: The other States seem to be supporting Rajkot and asking him not to yield. But I don't think that the Thakore will succeed. I don't know about Jaipur but in Rajkot the ground is well prepared.

Sri Aurobindo: If the States organise, backed by the Paramount Power and lend their support, then Rajkot may stand through and the Satyagraha may not succeed. Look at Mysore and Travancore — Mysore has only appointed a committee which may go on for three years and do nothing. Moreover it is very difficult to keep the movement non-violent. If it is kept to the middle class it may be possible, but if the masses come in then violence is inevitable. See the murder of Bazalgette in Orissa and the breaking out of violence in Travancore. Human nature is human nature. If the movement is confined to a small State like Rajkot it may succeed, but in the big States it is impossible to keep it non-violent.

Disciple: They say that in Travancore it was Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyar who engineered the outbreak.

Sri Aurobindo: I don't believe it. I have seen many cases and

Congress people are not noted for their truthfulness. They say what suits them. But if they propose to come out of the assemblies because of failure in Rajkot or Jaipur, it is not at all good. Such small States must be deprived of their power and be made like zamindars. One never knew before that there were so many States!

Disciple: Jaipur has again released Bajaj! (*Laughter)* Bajaj was a little hurt while being forcibly removed. Gandhiji called it "organised goondaism".

Sri Aurobindo: I don't understand why he calls it goondaism. If Bajaj resisted they had to use force to remove him and injury is quite possible.

Disciple: The Prajamandal has arranged to send five satyagrahis every week.

Sri Aurobindo: That would be about 260 a year — a little more than in our Ashram now. The States will have no difficulty in keeping them.

(*The talk turned to Baroda's royal family*.)

Disciple: Yuvaraj Pratapsingh Rao may be persuaded by his Dewan Krishnamachari to part with some of his privileges.

Sri Aurobindo: I saw his photograph today. He has a weak face, nothing of the grandfather in him. His father had more brilliance and dash. Pratapsingh has a soul, but not a strong one.

Jaysingh Rao was dull. Shivaji Rao was intelligent. I taught him French; he was a good student. Dhairyashil showed signs of premature development of lust. It was due to the servants of the palace. Indira was more interesting and there was something sturdy in her. She had the most of her father, Sayaji Rao, in her.

Disciple: There is a criticism of Pujalal's poetry by the Gujarati poet critic Khabardar. He says, it is not "rooted in the soil", too Sanskritised and not written for the masses. English poetry, he says, is founded on the Anglo-Saxon language.

Sri Aurobindo: Not at all. Poets from Shakespeare and Milton to Shelley and others did not write in the Anglo-Saxon language — except William Morris, who consciously used Anglo-Saxon words. They followed Latin and Greek vocabulary. And this idea of writing for the masses is stupid. Poetry was never written for the masses. It is only a minority that read and appreciate poetry. The definition of modern poetry is what the poet himself and a few of his admirers around him understand. Shakespeare and Milton are not mass poets.

Mrs. Hemans, like Martin Tupper, wrote for the masses: "The boy stood on the burning deck, whence all but he had fled;" — that sort of thing. Tupper sold more in his life than all the best poets put together. It is curious, many of the modern poets are communists, but they don't write for the proletariat.

≈

19 FEBRUARY 1939

Disciple: The maxim "From each according to his capacity and to each according to his need", seems to be the basis of Socialism.

Sri Aurobindo: Who is to decide the need? In the actual working of socialism there is a great divergence — some tackle only key industries like electricity and nationalise them, while others go into the minutest detail.

Disciple: Even the Communists in Russia have introduced divergence in wages to encourage the workers to do more work.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, but that comes to the same thing — only instead of the capitalist it is the State that pays the higher wages. Communism one can understand: a group owning property in common and receiving its benefits according to need and satisfying the need of the group. That is as old as the world. But State

ownership is something that creates a class like the Capitalists.

The Nazism in Germany, on the other hand, makes the national consciousness so strong that it begins to treat the individuals like the cells of the body — bound to think and act alike. No freedom is allowed to them.

Or take another example. The racial and national egos in the Balkans are so rigid that they could not protect themselves by creating a federation against Germany.

≈

21 FEBRUARY 1939

Disciple: In the political problem of India the States present a great obstacle — particularly to political unity.

Sri Aurobindo: It can be achieved as Germany did with her many States.

Disciple: There is a great rush for a public career nowadays, in fact there is a competition for it. But there are the low tendencies also visible. How to combat these tendencies?

Sri Aurobindo: By creating a tradition of respect for character, by throwing out dishonest men from public life. Politicians can lie but not be corrupt.

The parliamentary form of democracy is not necessarily suited to India. As it is, anybody stands as a candidate for election and either buys off votes or persuades them into giving it, or comes up by some trick. But he may not be the true representative. Besides, just anybody who comes with a majority should not be made a minister, only capable men should be given ministership — the policy may be reserved for the parliament.

Kingship like that of Aundh is best suited to India, where the

king is a religious minded person, a man of character and intelligence, who looks to the interest of all his subjects. But for that, the kings must be taught and prepared through hard training. Now, they learn only how to play cricket and drink, but in ancient times, a kings training was very hard.

≈

24 FEBRUARY 1939

Disciple: What is the part which the mind plays in the cure of a disease?

Sri Aurobindo: The mental factor is much more effective than is generally known or admitted. There are cases where the doctors have found that the mental factor has saved the patient by pulling him or her out from a critical condition; for example, mothers wanting to see their children saved, being pulled out of critical conditions.

Disciple: Which method of treatment is correct — the Chinese method of Acupuncture, Homeopathy, Ayurveda, or Allopathy?

Sri Aurobindo: Nature allows you to follow certain lines and on each she shows you what is possible. For example, they thought of electricity as wave motion and they found there was something that corresponded to that view. Now they think of it as made up of particles, and they find that it corresponds to that also.

Disciple: That is the realm of matter, but in life — for example, in the curing of a disease.

Sri Aurobindo: Mental factors determine the physical conditions much more than doctors would be prepared to grant. Coué's method succeeds and it cannot be considered useless, though it uses no medicine.

Disciple: Some disciples here believe that there is a collective

Karma for which either the group, the society or the nation has to bear the consequences like the individual.

Sri Aurobindo: The collective being is non-evolutionary. It is hard to believe in the reincarnations of races.

Disciple: Somebody seems to have said that the Romans are born as Americans.

Sri Aurobindo: Very queer Romans! You may say in some sense that the English are the ancient Carthaginians. Or one may even hazard that the French are Greeks reborn. But it wont carry us very far. You can't take for granted that one individual is always born in the same race or nation in which he is born now. So how can the nation-soul or race-soul reincarnate?

Disciple: Have the nations a soul?

Sri Aurobindo: You can speak of it as a collective or national being or entity. But it is not in evolution. It is not subject to the law of Karma.

Disciple: Can it be said that the law governing it is suprarational?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. Each collective being is a projection of the Cosmic Spirit for a particular purpose. You can speak of it as a particular Shakti.

Disciple: How does the collective being or Shakti work?

Sri Aurobindo: It identifies itself with a particular form — here of a group of individuals. There is a mutual action: it acts on the individual and the individual acts on it by manifesting it.

Disciple: Suppose the collective entity is dissolved from life?

Sri Aurobindo: When the physical form of the collectivity is dissolved here the collective being withdraws into the origin.

Disciple: Can a collective being, after such a dissolution, take another group for manifesting itself in it?

Sri Aurobindo: We have as yet no proof of it.

≈

25 FEBRUARY 1939

Disciple: There is a report about the students of the Annamalai University picketing and some of them are fasting.

Sri Aurobindo: Satyagraha is something to be applied in extreme cases, but Gandhi has almost made a law of it and so there are so many wrong applications of it, for everybody takes it up.

Disciple: Here in this case the fundamental relations are contradicted, e.g. the relation between teachers and students. It is not, for instance, the same as between workers and capitalists.

Sri Aurobindo: Even among workers, it makes a great difference if they are educated. For instance, in Europe, when they resort to stay in strike, the workers do not damage the machinery and they even work the important parts to keep it in order. While in India, where the labour is uneducated, you can't have it like that. They destroy the machinery and then are thrown out of employment. In the Savanne Mills they burnt the machinery and then were thrown out of employment. Similar was the case in the Madras Match Factory.

If you do not have a Bill like the Bombay Trade Disputes Bill, the industries will go to pot.

≈

12 MARCH 1939

Disciple: Did you notice Jawaharlal's article in *The Hindu*? He can't forget Subhas not acknowledging his report from Europe and

also his international politics.

Sri Aurobindo: That again shows Nehru is an idealist. If he has the clarity of mind to see that Socialism can come in India only after independence is won, it should be equally clear to him that India can do something in international politics only after she is free.

Disciple: The Congress wants to do something in the international field.

Sri Aurobindo: It is a hazy idea. All you have been able to do for China is to send an ambulance unit. It is not like England that can send money to stabilise the currency in China.

Disciple: I believe it is his visit to Europe in the League against Imperialism that gives him the impression that he would be able to *do* something in international politics.

Sri Aurobindo: It is a wrong impression. It was, for instance, wrongly supposed that the Governor of Pondicherry was recalled because Nehru represented the case to the Secretary of Colonies.

Disciple: Perhaps the Secretary might have said he would move in the matter.

Sri Aurobindo: He might have been only polite. They are always polite, but that does not mean anything. He might say, "I will look into the matter." Or, "Thank you for bringing the matter to my notice."

Disciple: Mahatmaji has secured a big triumph.

Sri Aurobindo: If some understanding is arrived at between the Princes and the Congress it would be very good.

Disciple: I don't know if Subhas will deliver his ultimatum.

Sri Aurobindo: If you have a revolutionary programme and a nation ready to kill or die, then you may indulge in ultimatums. India is not ready like Ireland was. They are prepared to get beaten, or to go to jail at the most. So you have to see what can be done. When India is really free it will think many times before meddling

in international problems before it is on its own feet.

Disciple: M. N. Roy got only 38 votes!

Sri Aurobindo: He might say: Hitler began with even less! But it does not always happen so. Some people remain where they are. Oswald Mosley is where he was ten years back, and poor Brailsford writes every week what everybody should do, but nobody seems to do what he says!

Subhas and his group are living even now in the mentality of 1906 and 1907; they don't know that conditions have changed. It is not always by fighting that you get what you want. With all his idealism Gandhi knows how far the people can go and in spite of his inner voice, he knows how far to go himself.

♈

6 MAY 1939

Arjava died on 5th May, at Bangalore. He was being treated by Dr. Brinitzer. Postmortem examination revealed pericardiatis, six ounces of water in the right side of the heart.

Disciple: Our Dr. X sticks to his rheumatism theory. The French doctor started with typhoid, but it was negatived by blood examination, and then suggested tuberculosis. Dr. Brinitzer in the beginning said that it was septisemia.

Disciple: So, even after the postmortem nobody was wiser. How is this possible that even after the postmortem they don't accept the diagnosis?

Sri Aurobindo: You can see that Dr. X is not ready to admit anything other than what he believes. He takes into consideration only those facts that support his views, and puts all other facts away. So nothing else can come in.

Disciple: What is the way out?

Sri Aurobindo: Intuition is the only way. But even there mental intuition may be right, but not always. Mind deals with the possibilities and some may come true. Again, true intuition has to be distinguished from the mental imitation of the same, or from mere suggestion or a strong impression.

Disciple: How can one save oneself from error?

Sri Aurobindo: There is no outer rule; you have to get the psychic tact which throws out the error. For example, the Mother used to feel about the soundness of houses and our engineer used to find out afterwards that her feeling was true, though she does not know architecture or engineering. Another necessity is that one must be sincere about finding the truth by intuition. That is to say, one must not jump at the first idea and run away with it. The mind must be absolutely impartial and also one must be patient and one must wait. One must also test his intuitions.

ϒ

16 MAY 1939

A letter received on 29th April from P, a disciple, written to T, a co-disciple here, spoke of his experience at Tiruvannamalai. He mentioned in his letter that the resistance in his physical being was broken by the spiritual experience he had there.

Disciple: What do you think of his saying that the resistance in the physical is gone?

Sri Aurobindo: I have heard people saying that the body of the Maharshi is shaking. How could he have done for someone else what he did not do, or did not care to do, for himself?

Disciple: But P describes his experience in all details: the

triangle of Fire, the Sun, the Maharshi, light pouring into himself, stillness of the body, a Himalayan silence and peace, and, as a result, the breaking of the resistance in the physical.

Sri Aurobindo: He had always the habit of making mental constructions and living in them. So, his valuation of the experience is not right.

Disciple: Why did he commit this mistake in the valuation?

Sri Aurobindo: He had a very powerful ego, which he never tried to get rid of when he was here, he always wanted to start an Ashram. Whenever you have this kind of ego it always interferes with the understanding and does not allow correct valuation. With every experience he gets, his ego swells up and uses the experience to strengthen itself.

Disciple: How to get rid of the ego?

Sri Aurobindo: It is not easy to get rid of it, but one has to keep on trying, then one may not commit blunders.

Disciple: He speaks of the Himalayan silence and peace he got.

Sri Aurobindo: Do you think he got it there for the first time? He got hundreds of experiences here.

⚘

MAY 1939

The subject of a talk between 20th and 27th was Trikal Drishti — vision (knowledge) of the Past, Present, and Future — and the Supramental Time-Vision. Why he had not known about his accident was also one of the questions.

Sri Aurobindo: I have never said that I am in full possession of the Supramental. People have wrong ideas about these things. One

must have a clear intelligence and know the logical consequences of the premisses.

Christ, in spite of his miracles, could not cure anyone in one district. He said: "I can't because they have no faith." People forget that there are conditions to be fulfilled. It is a question of the Divine Consciousness working in and through inferior principles, like mind and vital and body, and there are conditions to be fulfilled for the working.

Disciple: They say that God, being Omnipotent, should be able to do anything however impossible.

Sri Aurobindo: No. Omnipotence does not make God act as our mind wants or expects. Omnipotence does not work in one way; it works in many ways.

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER, 1939

19 AND 20 NOVEMBER 1939

Disciple: Is physical relation responsible for the vitiation of pure and idealistic love?

Sri Aurobindo: It is not only the physical but also the vital that is responsible. Desire, impulse of possession are more responsible for it than the physical relation.

Disciple: There are people who believe that the physical relation is an essential part of the highest relation of love.

Sri Aurobindo: Blake, for instance, says that spiritual love should be sanctified by the physical act.

Disciple: Selincourt criticizes Blake.

Sri Aurobindo: Selincourt writing about Blake is like a sheep trying to understand a lion! Blake has got power, you can say ferocious power; and theories too coherent to be sane.

Disciple: Has physical relation a place in psychic love?

Sri Aurobindo: It depends. It can be the psychic love extended to the body. In the psychic relation physical relation is possible; when it takes place it is for procreation. It is a part of the attitude of a female to the male — the attitude of submission. Surrender is more psychic than that.

Disciple: In the physical relation is there no danger of the higher elements getting lost?

Sri Aurobindo: It depends on the strength of the psychic being. It may be overclouded by the vital and the physical elements. Of course, when it is merely physical then there is no adoration and love in it. Psychic relation is not commonly found.

Disciple: An individual who has not found his companion, and

has hankering or need for one, meets a woman whom he loves. Now if he keeps his love free from physical and vital elements, i.e. keeps it pure and psychic, does it mean that such a relation is necessary for him?

Sri Aurobindo: No, that can't be said. It depends on the particular case to say whether it is necessary. The Vaishnavas wanted to sublimate even the lower elements of love by bringing them to the Divine. But we know the results — most of them failed. Not that it cannot be done, it can — but it is not easy.

Disciple: You have written in *The Synthesis of Yoga* that ordinary human love can act as a preparation and may be a form of aspiration.

Sri Aurobindo: It was not written for Yogis. It acts like that in ordinary men, if there is a psychic element in it, i.e. if it is true love and not vital desire or attachment or impulse for possession. Then it acts as an awakener and uplifter. Blake accepts physical love as part of the divine love. The elements of love are: adoration and desire for union.

Disciple: Is such a love an unconscious seeking for the Divine? It may not bring divine fulfilment but that of love itself.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, it is.

Disciple: Is it possible to evoke the Divine in oneself to love the other?

Sri Aurobindo: If one has found the Divine in oneself then one adores Him and surrenders oneself to Him. Such a man can love others — but that is a part of the action of universal love.

The spark in human love, even if it is degraded afterwards, tends to awaken the consciousness and evolve the being.

♏

21 NOVEMBER 1939

Disciple: If love is an unconscious seeking for the Divine, why do some people who have turned to the Divine, still seek the human love, especially here?

Sri Aurobindo: Are they conscious of the Divine? If one is conscious of the Divine, one of two things would happen: either one would turn exclusively to the Divine, or, being conscious of the Divine one may keep the human love as an appendage, and try to raise it towards the Divine. I am not speaking of sex relations.

Disciple: Supposing a man is unconscious and seeks the Divine in human love, can it not be a seeking for the Divine?

Sri Aurobindo: These things are hardly pure — they are always mixed up. It may be only a cover for something else. There are people who, as I said, when they turn to the Divine turn away from everything else. But it depends.

For instance, when you turn to the Divine you do not give up your friendship for somebody. Only, if you turn to the Divine the friendship ceases in the old sense, but is taken up so that it does not become an obstacle to the progress of each other.

There may be even individual love apart from the universal love which one gets when one is conscious of the Divine.

♏

14 DECEMBER 1939

The talk was about how the yogis working on the events of the last war, each in his own way, may have cut across each others work, because up to the Overmind everything is a play of possibilities and one may counteract another.

Sri Aurobindo: Quite so. Dayananda [*of Bengal*] had an idea of

establishing world peace by bringing all the nations together. He could have said that he established the League of Nations and somebody else disestablished it.

Disciple: Did you meet him?

Sri Aurobindo: No. I met Mahindra Dey, one of his disciples who was a scientist in the Bengal National College. When I wrote about the future Avatar, he said the Avatar was already there. After the shooting affair took place he recanted Dayananda's Avatarhood.

Disciple: He used to keep nothing for the morrow in his organisation — they depended entirely on Divine Grace.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. And he also started, I believe, Sannyasi marriage, but I can't say if it was real marriage or spiritual. But he had something genuine in him.

Disciple: Another Avatar is coming out from Poona. He is going to declare himself in 1941.

Sri Aurobindo: No objection. But there is a great danger of imagination mixing up in such things.

Disciple: Can such people be mystics?

Sri Aurobindo: No, perhaps romantic. There can also be a mixture of mysticism combined with romance. When one deals with mysticism one has to be very careful, because there are many truths and also many imaginations.

Disciple: The Rosicrucians also believe in the reality of mystic experiences.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. Arjava belonged to that group in England. But it created a lot of difficulty in his Sadhana, because Rosicrucians posit two principles in man, good and evil personas. The evil persona has to rise up in order to be got rid of by the good. There are already sufficient evil things in Nature without evoking one's evil persona. Europeans have a very imperfect understanding of these things. Even the Christian mystics have hardly any clear idea

about them.

Disciple: Perhaps that is so because they do not want to get rid of their individuality.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. They mix up the self and the ego. Even when they have identification with the Higher Consciousness, they think that it is the ego which has become that.

Even Blake who had some idea of identity with the Self seems to confuse ego with self.

Disciple: A says that the Gita's idea of Moksha demands freedom from Prakriti. Therefore, so long as man follows Buddhi he is not free.

Sri Aurobindo: Does the Gita say that he can't be free?

Disciple: In the verse where it is said Sattwa binds by happiness and knowledge.

Sri Aurobindo: That is quite another thing. The question is whether Buddhi can help you to detach yourself from your nature and lead you to the perception of something higher than itself.

Disciple: I think the text of the Gita supports this role of the Buddhi.

Sri Aurobindo: I should think so. Otherwise what is the meaning of the Gita laying so much stress on Buddhi? Buddhi helps you to detach yourself and prepares you for the higher perception of the Purusha. And even Shankara, I believe, does not say that reason is quite useless. He also admits that reason prepares the human spirit for what is beyond. Even for going beyond Sattwa, it is a stepping stone.

Disciple: Does this mean Buddhi is an instrument of Nature?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, it is an instrument that helps you to rise to the higher Nature. The Gita, as I said, maintains that Buddhi can perceive that which is beyond it.

Disciple: A does not want to admit M's contention that Kant's idea of following Reason and the Gita's Buddhi Yoga are the same.

Sri Aurobindo: Well, in a controversy one has to see the truth in the other man's point of view.

Disciple: A told me that Kant changed his mind later in life and admitted the necessity of Faith with which he deals in his *Critique of Practical Reason.*

Sri Aurobindo: I have not read European philosophy carefully.

Disciple: Moreover, it does not interest us so much as there is no practical side to their philosophy.

Sri Aurobindo: That was Arjava's great complaint, that people here want always something practical from philosophy. They don't want to think for the sake of thinking.

Disciple: Kant seems to say that he who follows his reason is free, he who follows the senses is bound. This is, in part, an Indian idea.

Sri Aurobindo: But they have no idea of freedom in the Indian sense — of Mukti; their idea is to arrive at the Truth.

Disciple: They have also some idea of applying that Truth to life.

Disciple: Yes, some sort of idealism, but it is not spiritual. In his *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant maintains that pure reason is an abstract faculty hardly to be found unmixed in man, and so practical reason is necessary.

Sri Aurobindo: What is then this 'pure reason' for?

Disciple: It is only an unattainable ideal. A says that the contention of Kant's opponents is that everybody follows reason, so everybody should be considered free. Everyone justifies his action — even the thief supports his stealing by some reasoning.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, it is very practical reasoning. (*Laughter*)

Disciple: And he is free, because he acts freely.

Sri Aurobindo: How?

Disciple: Because he decides freely to steal.

Sri Aurobindo: But that is a reason that is bound. There is a reason that can be detached. According to the Gita, one is not free by merely reasoning about stealing; it is only if he can steal with disinterestedness that he is free.

Disciple: To the Western mind such ideas are difficult to grasp, for instance killing with detachment.

Sri Aurobindo: All European philosophers after the Greeks consider Reason as the faculty by which one arrives at Truth. The question about sense perceptions and their reliability is easily met. We perceive certain things by our senses, and for all men sensations are the same because our senses have a common origination. Even then, different persons perceive the same thing differently.

But if Reason could work in the abstract and be an ideal faculty it might arrive at a perception of the Truth beyond itself. As it is, it deals with different ideas and there it differs in different individuals. What I say is that if Reason was sufficient for arriving at the Truth then all reasonings would arrive at the same conclusions. But we find that different persons using reason arrive at different conclusions even from the same premisses.

Reason can perceive that there is something beyond itself that is the Truth. But it is not right when it asserts that what it perceives is the whole Truth. Truth is infinite and it has infinite sides. What can be known by the mind is Sat, Chit, Ananda. In other words, when the Absolute presents itself to the mind it formulates itself as Sachchidananda. One can know the Absolute through that only.

15 DECEMBER 1939 (EVENING)

P entered and looked at Sri Aurobindo. C and N looked at each other and smiled. C suddenly burst out laughing. Sri Aurobindo raised his right hand in a gesture which meant, "What is the cause of this laughter?"

Disciple: My presence acts as a catalytic agent, so I myself don't know what is the cause or the joke.

Sri Aurobindo: That is how the subliminal self acts — without your knowledge, while your surface consciousness is ignorant about it.

Disciple: Between Hegel and Kant, poor N's question was lost.

Sri Aurobindo: What was it?

Disciple: N says that just like reasonings, experiences differ and come to different conclusions. How then can experience be a criterion?

Sri Aurobindo: Experience is not a criterion; it is a means of arriving at the Truth. But experience is one thing and its expression is another. You are again putting up reason as the true judge over experience, whereas it is beyond reason. Reason is only a judge of expression. When men differ in laying stress on, or in their mental preference for, this or that side of an experience, it does not mean the experience itself is invalid. It is only when you try to put an experience in mental language that differences arise, because as soon as you put it in mental terms you limit it. If you find that experiences also differ, you have to go on adding experience after experience till you come to the reconciling experience in which all find their places.

Truth is infinite and there are innumerable sides to it. Each conclusion of reason has some truth in it and we have to find something that is fundamental behind that particular formulation of the reason. But when reason says that only a particular conclusion it

has come to contains the whole Truth, it is wrong. That which is behind experience is the Absolute and the Absolute cannot be known by reason.

When you want to describe a spiritual experience you are obliged to use mental terms which are quite inadequate. That is why the Vedantists say that mind and speech cannot express the Truth. Still you can somehow manage to express something so long as you deal with levels up to the Overmind. But when you enter the Supermind then it is almost impossible. And if you proceed still higher towards the Absolute, well, it is impossible.

Disciple: It is so perhaps because reason is obliged to consider the Infinite.

Sri Aurobindo: Reason takes up one standpoint and declares the others to be false. If it speaks of the Absolute as Impersonal, it says the Personal cannot be true and vice versa.

Disciple: Is it Personal or Impersonal?

Sri Aurobindo: If you transcend both you arrive at the Absolute, and find that wherever there is the Personal there is the Impersonal, and vice versa.

Disciple: So they are aspects of the Absolute.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, but it does not mean they are less true or that the Absolute excludes them.

Disciple: How to find that kind of reconciliation?

Sri Aurobindo: Throw aside reason, then you find the reconciliation. In a certain sense reason would not be right if it did not differ. For instance, if the descriptions of all the countries were the same it would not do.

Disciple: How?

Sri Aurobindo: If you describe Switzerland and U.S A. in the same way, how can it be true? And yet the earth is one and so is mankind and human nature. All is one.

Disciple: There is a verse in the Upanishad for knowledge by identity, leaving aside the mind. "One must become one with That like an arrow piercing the mark."

Sri Aurobindo: That wont quite fit, because knowledge by identity is much more than that. Generally by 'knowledge by identity' they mean knowledge of the Self; but that is only one part of it.

Disciple: In Raja Yoga they speak of direct knowledge by Samyama — concentration of the consciousness on one object.

Sri Aurobindo: That is a different thing; that comes by putting the pressure of consciousness on the thing to be known. But direct knowledge need not necessarily require concentrating on the object. When the true consciousness is there and it comes in contact with the object, it knows it directly.

Disciple: Raja Yoga also speaks of Siddhis — control over matter, knowledge of Suryaloka and Chandraloka, conquest of death, etc.

Sri Aurobindo: Knowledge of Suryaloka and Chandraloka one may have, but conquest of death is another matter. The Raja Yogi does not acquire Siddhis by wanting them; they speak of Siddhis coming to them. And it is true for those who enter a certain state of consciousness.

Disciple: The Upanishad also speaks of the yogi's conquering diseases and death.

30 DECEMBER 1939

Disciple: The Hindu Mahasabha this year has got a larger number of delegates from Bengal and Punjab than from the other provinces.

Sri Aurobindo: From the two provinces which are most oppressed under Muslim majority.

Disciple: Do you think that the Hindu Mahasabha, if it is organised, would weaken the Congress?

Sri Aurobindo: Congress should allow the Mahasabha in Punjab and Bengal to settle the question with the Muslims by organising the Hindus instead of quarrelling with it. If Congress could do something effective then it would be all right.

Disciple: Some people object to Vande Mataram as a national song. And some Congressmen support the removal of some parts of the song.

Sri Aurobindo: In that case the Hindus should give up their culture.

Disciple: The objection is that it speaks of the Hindu goddess Durga and that is offensive to the Muslims.

Sri Aurobindo: But it is not a religious song! It is a national song and the Durga spoken of is India as the Mother. Why shouldn't the Muslims accept it? It is an image used in poetry. If in the conception of Indian nationality the Hindu viewpoint cannot find a place then the Hindus may as well be asked to give up their culture; it comes to this that we all become Mohammedans. They don't say it now but they will say it later on, because they have begun to object to the worship of Hindu Gods in national institutions. Why shouldn't the Hindu worship his Gods? Otherwise, the Hindus must either become Mohammedans or adopt European culture, or become atheists. The Hindus don't object to their "Allah ho Akbar".

Disciple: They will object if that is made a national song.

Disciple: If they call India Allah I don't think the Hindus will object.

Sri Aurobindo: It is not in their nature to object to such things.

Disciple: Why shouldn't the Muslims accept some Hindu ideas,

if they want to come to a settlement?

Disciple: The Congress says that the question cannot be solved as long as the third party is there.

Sri Aurobindo: I had told Das that this question should be solved before the British go out, otherwise there was a danger of a civil war. He agreed and wanted to solve it.

Disciple: The Congress thinks that if the British go, the Muslims may be forced to come to a settlement.

Sri Aurobindo: The Congress says, "Whatever agreements we come to must be accepted by the British."

Disciple: If the parties come to a settlement the Viceroy cannot oppose it.

Sri Aurobindo: Of course not. He would say, "Come to a settlement and we will accept it." It is only two ways of looking at the same thing. It is better to have it settled before because afterwards any third party may take advantage and come in. It is no use having again somebody else to dominate India.

Disciple: Afghanistan may; Turkey and Egypt do not care.

Sri Aurobindo: Russia also may come.

Disciple: Japan also.

Disciple: But how is this problem to be solved?

Sri Aurobindo: The best solution would be if Congress got the majority of nationalist Muslims on their side. They could have had the Sindh Premier who wanted to be with them and would have retained Sindh. In Punjab they could have come to some understanding with Sikandar Hayat Khan. And if they had not driven out Khaliquzzaman in U.P. there would have been no Muslim League there. If they had joined hands with the Krishak party in Bengal then they would not be so badly off. But they go by some fixed and rigid rules. They have no plasticity. It is a question of political sagacity.

Disciple: Jawaharlal seems to have realised the utility of wooing the Muslims.

Sri Aurobindo: That was the mistake of the Congress. They are instead trying to flirt with Jinnah. And Jinnah simply thinks that he has to obstinately stick to his terms to get them. The more they try the more he becomes intransigent.

Disciple: There was the idea that the Congress should have mass contact with the Muslim masses. Then somebody in U.P. said that the Congress has divided the Muslims.

Sri Aurobindo: And the Congress gave up that movement?

Disciple: I don't know.

Sri Aurobindo: That is foolish. Why should not the Muslims be divided? You might as well say that the English are trying to divide the Germans. Doesn't Jinnah try to call in the Hindu minorities to join him? Nobody objects to his appeal on the ground that he is trying to divide the Hindus.

Disciple: Then the Hindu Mahasabha will do some good after all.

Sri Aurobindo: That is not the best thing. But if the Hindus organised themselves, that would make the rational Muslims think again. And that will give men like Sir Akbar, who want to come to a compromise, a chance to intervene.

Disciple: The Khilafat agitation was a great mistake; it only added to the fanaticism of the Muslims without giving them patriotism or nationalism.

1940

4 JANUARY 1940

In a previous talk, I had reported that Indologists claimed Mohenjodaro was Dravidian because a tribe was discovered in Baluchistan whose language was akin to Dravidian. The theory that the two races had intermingled, my friend G had said, was supported by the fact that as one moves further south and east one sees a greater proportion of dark-skinned people.

Disciple: I had a talk again with G about the Rigveda and the Aryan-Dravidian question. He gave two arguments: In Indian families, the fact of different children having different colours is a positive argument according to biology that the race of the parents is a mixed one. Secondly, in the Rigveda itself there is a mention of dark-skinned people and *anāsah.* I replied that *anāsah* figures only in one Rik out of more than ten thousand, and it may not mean noseless or flat-nosed.

Sri Aurobindo: *Anāsah* is not flat-nosed. It is noseless.

Disciple: I saw the Rik and it refers only to the Dasyus and not to non-Aryans.

Sri Aurobindo: Orientalists also wanted to prove the existence of Linga worship in the Rigveda by citing one Rik in which the word Shishnadeva occurs.

Disciple: K. M. Munshi had written that Bhakti is nothing but sublimation of the sex impulse, and tried to trace its origin to that Rik. I had contradicted his view and shown that Shishnadeva only means sensualist.

Sri Aurobindo: Quite so. And what do they have to say about the Dravidian tribe in Baluchistan? Is it black and flat-nosed? How the devil do they find out all these things from the Rigveda —

nomadic existence, gambling, crossing of the rivers, etc? I find that the fight between the Tritsus and Sudansahs in the eighth mandala is not a battle at all; it is something symbolic.

Disciple: That is one of the strongest points in the Indologist armoury. If one can get the clue to the symbol of the ten Kings that would be the end of their theory.

Disciple: Did you hear J's interpretation of your poem "Trance"? He says that the 'star' there stands for the individual soul and the 'Moon' for the Universal. The 'storm' is doubt. When doubt is cleared from the mental sky, the individual soul stands face to face with the Universal.

Sri Aurobindo: If there is any philosophy in it I am not aware of it. What I have described is a condition of inner experience. He seems to read his own mind into the poem, but it is not poetry, it is metaphysics. It's like what they make of the Rigvedas *anāsah*, the flat-nose of the European scholars.

(*In the evening, after reading the poem again, he said*:)

I have explained everything in the poem itself: I speak of the star of creation, the moon of ecstasy and the storm-breath of the soul-change, that is to say, the upheaval before the change. The trance brings in a change of the outer consciousness and nature. There is no philosophy anywhere.

♏

5 JANUARY 1940

Disciple: I am trying to get intuition but I fail.

Sri Aurobindo: Perhaps you were disappointed with your last brinjal intuition, and so it is not coming.

Disciple: But Nolini Sen began to have guidance as soon as he

started Yoga. He has a mind which seems open to the intuitive faculty.

Sri Aurobindo: He had been doing yoga for some time.

Disciple: Guidance in what way?

Sri Aurobindo: Guidance in solving practical difficulties. A man of successful action gets a sort of insight which is half-intuition; while a man of intellect is generally handicapped, his intellect thinks of various possibilities, saying this may happen, that may happen.

Disciple: Has a man of successful action no intellect?

Sri Aurobindo: He has, but for action he *feels* what will hapen and seizes upon it. He acts upon the suggestion and in most cases it turns out to be right. Not that he does not go wrong at all. The nature of his mind is such that he is open to this intuitive faculty of action. The English people are so successful because they have a knack of getting vital intuition which leads to success. Even if they commit mistakes and jumble things together, in the end their intuition comes to their help and pulls them out of the difficulty. The French on the other hand are more logical. They think and reason.

Disciple: The English are thinking of helping Finland more actively because they are afraid of a German-Russian naval combination in the Baltic.

Sri Aurobindo: But how are they going to help? They require ammunition and military equipment for themselves. I don't know how they could have enough to spare.

(*After some time the talk reverted to N's difficulty*.)

Sri Aurobindo (*to N*)**:** Are you trying to get intuition in a special way?

Disciple: Yes, in my medical work.

Sri Aurobindo: Instead of limiting yourself to a special field,

why not try to have the faculty in a general way?

Disciple: In what way?

Sri Aurobindo: For everything. For example, what S is going to do next. Or, if you are a reader of novels, try to guess what will follow; of course, it is easy for an expert reader to do this. After all, many people get intuition without knowing it.

♏

8 JANUARY 1940

Disciple: Have you read C. V. Raman's address at the Science Congress?

Sri Aurobindo: I believe so.

Disciple: He says they have discovered two new elements — I don't know how!

Sri Aurobindo: Not discovered, created. By changing the position of the particles in the atom. What are they going to do with them?

Disciple: The cost of producing anything will be prohibitive, though the method of breaking up atoms by cyclotrons is cheap. Raman has supported Einstein's theory about unity of matter and energy.

Sri Aurobindo: Has anybody cast a doubt on it?

Disciple: No.

Sri Aurobindo: But what is energy?

Disciple: Modern scientists have stopped asking that question. They only concern themselves with the how and not the why or the what. But their own discoveries will make the question more pointed.

Sri Aurobindo: Quite so. Because the question is why a different combination of atomic particles should make a different element.

Disciple: Once energy was said to be lines of force and there was a theory of vortices in vogue.

Sri Aurobindo: That means force in movement. You know energy when it is in activity, and then the question arises what is force?

Disciple: They don't answer this question.

Sri Aurobindo: Unless you accept a Being behind who applies the force and also becomes matter there is no other explanation. When they are given this reply they say it is all nonsense. They explain it by saying it is Nature. They don't know what is Nature. It is merely giving a name. Nature stands for a magic formula, a Maya, and they explain everything by that formula.

Disciple: The scientists swore by the rigorous law of causation but now they find it difficult to apply it in their investigations.

Sri Aurobindo: What is causation? It only means that certain conditions follow certain other conditions.

Disciple: How can the presence of somebody behind a force be proved?

Sri Aurobindo: There is no other explanation.

Disciple: He didn't say a 'body' but a Being.

Sri Aurobindo: I have said in *The Life Divine* that you cannot explain the appearance of consciousness out of Matter unless you accept a Being behind. That Being may be either unmanifest and involved in Matter or it may manifest itself.

Disciple: It is Brahman playing on Brahman or with it.

Sri Aurobindo: They will accept Brahman playing within Brahman, but not anything outside it.

Disciple: They want to catch Brahman with their scientific

instruments.

Disciple: They have despaired even of that! They have come to the materialistic conception of the Universe. They speak of tensorial laws!

10 JANUARY 1940

Disciple: In a publication of the Gita Press the writer is trying to prove the efficacy of repeating the Divine Name and of Kirtan. He cites Tulsidas in support of his contention.

Sri Aurobindo: If it was so easy it would have been delightful.

Disciple: There is a story of Ajamil in the Puranas to support the efficacy of repeating the Name.

Sri Aurobindo: It depends upon the psychic being. If it is touched and wakens and throws its influence on the other parts of the nature, then Name and Kirtan have a value.

Disciple: Has mechanical repetition no effect?

Sri Aurobindo: If it touches the psychic being, it has.

Disciple: In Kirtan people easily go into a kind of trance.

Sri Aurobindo: There are other effects too, sometimes undesirable. Very often it arouses the vital instead of the psychic being.

Disciple: X has retired. Do you think he is doing your Yoga?

Sri Aurobindo: He has his own way of doing Yoga; his seclusion, I believe, is temporary.

Disciple: People cite your example in favour of retirement.

Sri Aurobindo: It is wrong to say that I do not accept life because I do not actively participate in it. But it is true that I am not

for acceptance of life as it is.

Disciple: We accept life, i.e. nature, but we accept it for transformation. Some sadhaks are not taking part in ordinary life, but can it be said that they are retired, or can we say they are not doing your Yoga?

Disciple: Z likes ordering people about; he seems full of anger, jealousy, egoism, etc.

Sri Aurobindo: That changes last because the outer being is the last to change; it does not mean that there has been no progress or experience within.

Disciple: In Ramana Maharshi's Ashram one feels at once the peace, etc.

Sri Aurobindo: Is there nobody in the Ashram here who is quiet and peaceful?

Disciple: In the outside world also you find people who are not jealous and are peaceful. The difficulty is how to find them without attaining inner perfection oneself.

Sri Aurobindo: M felt the peace here and immediately went in for the Yoga. For us it is nothing compared to what is yet to be done.

In the evening, after some talk about the war:

Disciple: In *The New Statesman and Nation*, J. M. condemns Huxley's *After Many a Summer* as a witty parody thrown into philosophical form.

Sri Aurobindo: This criticism is not worse than Anthony West's who doesn't admit even the wit. They say Forster also is philosophical.

Disciple: Like Tagore these people don't seem to like intellectual novels. But Tagore's own novels also are intellectual!

Sri Aurobindo: Do people want stupid rather than intellectual novels to be written?

Disciple: Tagore, in his novels, analyses various psychological movements which common people can't understand. Sharat Chandra can be said to be a non-intellectual writer.

Disciple: Yes, except in his *Shesher Prashna.*

Disciple: So far as I have read it, it doesn't seem to be very intellectual.

Sri Aurobindo: He is not much of a thinker.

Disciple: He seems to have pleaded the cause of Western civilisation and made the arguments against it very weak. For instance, his heroine doesn't find anything grand in the conception behind the Taj Mahal.

Sri Aurobindo: What is there Western about this attitude? The one thing Europeans like in India is the Taj.

Disciple: I don't mean the architectural beauty. What she ridicules is the idea of immortal love.

Sri Aurobindo: Even from that point of view, the Europeans like it. Love has a great place in their life.

Disciple: But love in the sense of being faithful to one person alone even if that person is dead — it is that the heroine cannot bear.

Disciple: Sharat Chandra seems to advocate re-marriage or no marriage, free love, as far as I understand.

Sri Aurobindo: But why is free love European? In Europe no one advocates such an idea except a few intellectuals. If you want to abolish the marriage system, then the Europeans will raise a hue and cry.

23 FEBRUARY 1940 (EVENING)

Disciple: Why should God have created the world, was he unhappy?

Sri Aurobindo: Do you create when you are unhappy? Does Nirod write poetry because he is miserable?

Disciple: No, to get more joy.

Sri Aurobindo: Then he is full of joy and wants more.

Disciple: God is always full of joy.

Disciple (*to previous disciple*)**:** What is your idea of creation?

Disciple: It is Swayambhu, self-existent, according to Jainism. So God cannot have created this world, he lacks the motive.

Disciple: If God has not created this world you cannot get his help in liberation.

Disciple: In Jainism each one gets liberation by his own efforts. Even the Tirthankars don't help.

Sri Aurobindo: Of what use are they then?

Disciple: They serve as examples. It is the *shāsan devatas*, the worshippers of the Tirthankars, who help.

Sri Aurobindo: Then you can worship *them*! But if the Devas worship Tirthankars they should not help either because their ideal is the attainment of Tirthankars. Why should they help? It is also a contradiction of the law of Karma. If Karma brings its own reward inevitably then the help of God is unnecessary. If God helps and intervenes effectively and changes the result of action, then the law of Karma is not absolute.

Disciple: Jainism believes in Purushartha.

Sri Aurobindo: If you believe in Purushartha you can't expect the Grace of God. How can you pray to Him to help you?

Disciple: I believe in Grace but in Jainism they don't. They

believe each one is alone and they say: "I have come alone and will go alone." This feeling will give Vairagya.

Sri Aurobindo: If one is alone, how do the Tirthankars and Acharyas, and such an infinite number of Siddhas crowded in Siddhasila come in? Like all religions it is fantastically illogical. Buddha also said the same thing, but the religion says: "Buddham Sharanam Gachchhami." So also in Jainism.

Disciple: In Jainism self-mortification persists. In Buddhism it is not there. Buddha gave it up after a trial. Buddha and Mahavir were contemporaries but they don't seem to have met. Mahavir was born in Vaisali.

Disciple: In Jainism each soul is bound by ignorance and there are three ties of that ignorance and three ways of liberation. This has been symbolised in the Swastika.

Sri Aurobindo: Hitler took the Swastika from there then? (*Laughter*)

Disciple: Because he wants to dominate over all the world.

Disciple: Jainism believes in the multiplicity of Prakritis and in one Purusha.

Disciple: It is like the Sankhya system.

Sri Aurobindo: They took it from Sankhya. Their whole stand is based on the Sankhya.

M was repeating the Navakar like the Gayatri.

Disciple: It sounds like Pali.

Disciple: Yes, it is written in Magadhi. It is a Prakrit dialect.

Sri Aurobindo: What kind of Prakrit? There are many Prakrits.

Disciple: The one that was then current in Bihar.

Disciple: Mahavir was a Bihari.

❁

FEBRUARY 1940

Bijoy Goswami passed the last years of his life in Puri and he came to the conclusion that so long as poverty was there in India, spiritual and religious teaching had no chance. One of his disciples writes in the last issue of the *Kalyān* that in his last years he believed in *dāna yagña*, charity. So much so that he ran into debt and when his health was failing the disciple had to arrange for the money to pay up a loan, because Bijoy Goswami said that he would not leave Puri before paying the debt. He asked his disciples not to be calculating and practical but to do work as a divine work, without thinking of tomorrow.

Sri Aurobindo: It is one thing not to think of tomorrow and quite another to try to remove poverty by feeding the poor. People don't understand that philanthropy cannot remove poverty, it can at the most relieve it. If you want to remove poverty you must find the causes of poverty and remove them. It is not a correct idea that when people have plenty they will think of God, since the greater number of spiritual people have been those who have renounced everything and lived on very little. As soon as people have money they forget those who have no money.

Disciple: His idea was that people cannot believe that God is all-merciful, kind and loving, unless at least their physical needs are satisfied.

Sri Aurobindo: If the idea is that God is all compassionate and must look after everybody's food and clothing, then of course his principle would be true.

Disciple: At last all his disciples had to collect large sums far away in Bengal and send him the money to pay the debt. But he never reached Calcutta; I believe he died in Puri.

Sri Aurobindo: But I heard that he was poisoned by some jealous Sadhus. He made *sthambhan* — control, on poison for some time, but ultimately he could not prevail.

≈

1 MARCH 1940

Disciple: Does Barin's article show any change in his attitude?

Sri Aurobindo: It is difficult to say about him. He says what is uppermost in his mind, what suits him at the moment. There may be a change in his attitude, but its difficult to say if there is an inner progress. Or it may be a mental change due to his having failed in everything after going from here while the Ashram has grown ever since. That may have impressed him.

Disciple: He admits that he had fallen from the path and in his attitude towards the Mother.

Disciple: Somebody said he used to speak highly of her.

Disciple: No, he was critical.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. He says things according to his own moods and says it with force. He wrote a book on the Mother and asked Andrews for an introduction. Andrews refused, saying, "I know the Mother." And Moore refused to believe his criticisms of the Ashram.

Disciple: A.B. says his ideas began to come in January.

Sri Aurobindo: Of course. Does he not know from where they are coming?

Disciple: He wants to know that when Mother has said this is "a year of silence and expectation" what should he do?

Sri Aurobindo: Observe silence and be expectant!

Disciple: What he wants to know is whether the literary work he is doing with the approval of the Mother is not going to interrupt the silence, especially if he goes in for controversy.

Sri Aurobindo: I suppose one can do the work in silence. But he should not engage in controversy. He has too combative a mind. If he goes in for controversy naturally the silence will be interrupted.

Disciple: If he does this sort of work and somebody contradicts him, naturally he will have to counter-contradict.

Sri Aurobindo: Why? Many people criticise me. I don't answer. It is not necessary that he should answer.

Disciple: Nolini and I decided not to try to convert anyone about Vedic interpretation but to go on repeating over and over again our own point.

Sri Aurobindo: That is Hitler's method.

Disciple: That is why nobody contradicts Nolini!

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. When people find that the opponent does not answer they lose all interest.

Disciple: A.B. says it is true he has lost touch with the reality of the external world. Now if he reads *Manchester Guardian* and *New Statesman* will it disturb his silence?

Sri Aurobindo: It depends on his mind. If he can read all these things in order to know what is going on, it is all right, but he should not run away with any idea or programme. He was asked not to read papers because his mind was a slave to politics and attracted by the ideas. The fundamental peace and silence is all right, but he should bring the attitude of the Purusha in his reading also.

Disciple: I did not know that he also has such difficulties!

Sri Aurobindo: You thought he has reached the Supreme Siddhi?

Disciple: Not so much, but a cosmic consciousness.

Sri Aurobindo: You mean an all-India consciousness?

You can tell him that he must not attack or contradict people. When he reads anything he must not allow his mind to run away with any ideas, but take up the attitude of the witness and see from where these things come. And if he does not allow the mind to identify with any of them he will know the right source of action and knowledge. You were speaking of Cosmic Consciousness. All these ideas are there in the general Prana and have equal validity from the point of view of Cosmic Consciousness. They may be as much true as his own; for example, when Basanta Chatterji contradicts him there is some truth in what he says. He has to see what distortion the mind has brought into democracy — personal ambitions, boycotts, etc.

Disciple: Dikshit also used to have many brilliant ideas, such as a common kitchen, cleaning up Baroda city, etc.

Sri Aurobindo: Is he talking of a common kitchen? Why not have everything common? Ideas are always brilliant. Co-operation is always possible, because each finds his self-interest in the interest of others.

Disciple: Was A.B. a political leader?

Sri Aurobindo: He was just beginning his career, but that sort of leadership is nothing. If you have the gift of the gab and power of ideas and putting form into them, you can always succeed. All politics is a show. In the British Parliament it is the Civil Service who are behind, and whose names are never known, who really do the work. The Ministers are only their mouthpieces except men like Churchill and Hore-Belisha who can do something. The civil servants have been at their job for their lifetime, and they know everything about it.

The Mother's brother, for instance, organised Congoland, but the Minister got all the credit for it. He was one of the best colonial

administrators. Even when he was an officer in Equatorial Africa, sometimes as Governor and sometimes as Governor-General, the whole job was done by him. He hardly used his bed and used to lie down in an easy-chair. Now he is nearly seventy, but as soon as the war was declared he went to the office and asked for his work back. Now he is working eighteen hours a day.

A.B. is living in his mind. No 'isms' or mental programmes will do if you want to base things on the Spirit. They are all out of count. It is the repetition of the old mental way. Are the villagers going to understand my philosophy? If he goes to work, he will find himself out of touch with realities and will have the same fall as Barin, who went out to revolutionise the world.

Disciple: And he ended by revolutionising himself.

Disciple: These things can be only done by the Government.

Disciple: Yes, but both constructive work and this kind of political work can go together as Gandhi is doing.

Sri Aurobindo: With very little success.

♈

25 APRIL 1940

R was saying to C in the train that his difficulty was about accepting the Mother. Because, he said, they used to meditate together and therefore he found it difficult to accept her.

Disciple: But how could he have meditated with her? Nobody ever meditated with the Mother until just a few years before the Ashram came into existence in 1926.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, even then in the beginning there were very few people.

Disciple: At first, Mother meditated only with Sri Aurobindo.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, but that was individual. She was coming to me and her position was special even from the very beginning. There was no comparison between others and Mother.

There were people in the Ashram who thought that Mother had done no Sadhana before she came to India.

ϑ

20 MAY 1940

Disciple: Why does Hitler say that he wants to finish his campaign before August 15?

Sri Aurobindo: That's a clear indication, if an indication was necessary, that he is the enemy of our work. And from the values concerned in the conflict it should be quite clear that what is behind him is the Asuric power.

Disciple: Does the Asura fear that a descent might take place on August 15, it being your birthday, which will make his work more difficult?

Sri Aurobindo: This Being does not believe in a divine descent; it is a sort of challenge: "I will finish my first decisive victory before August 15." That shows the nature of the conflict.

Disciple: It does not seem to be only one Being, but a troop.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, but the one behind Hitler is leading. It has often come here to see what kind of work is being done. Have you read Richard's *The Lord of the Nations*?

Disciple: No. I read only his "To the nation".

Sri Aurobindo: The book was never published, but he wrote it at a time when he was in communion with this Being. He said there that the present civilisation is to be destroyed, but really it is the destruction of the whole human civilisation that is aimed at.

Already in Germany Hitler has done it: there is no civilisation left there. What reigns there is barbarism supported by science.

Disciple: Most of these people do not believe in any religion. They seem to want to destroy Christianity and all religion.

Sri Aurobindo: That is what I meant when I said these Germans have preserved the barbarian in them. What they have got is scientific knowledge, mechanical skill, but all the cultural activities that used to be there are suppressed. And Hitler suppresses them wherever he goes; he has done it in Poland and in Czechoslovakia.

Disciple: Man is only used by the Germans as a part of their machinery and organisation.

Sri Aurobindo: Exactly so.

Disciple: And Hitler is talking of reviving the worship of the old Norse gods.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, they are crude conceptions of the primitive instincts of mankind. Even though Odin is considered a god of knowledge it is more or less primitive instincts that he symbolises.

Disciple: Do these Beings know about the existence of the Divine and deny it? or are they ignorant about it?

Sri Aurobindo: It depends on their nature. They know about the existence of the Gods, for instance, but they don't consider them higher than themselves.

Disciple: Yes, and they don't merely ignore the Gods but claim to create a world order of their own.

Sri Aurobindo: When these Beings themselves act, no human power can stand against them. It is all right as long as there is a question of influencing men, that is to say, as long as it is the divine and the Asuric influences working. But when it is a question of a possession or an incarnation, as in the case of Hitler, then it is a very different matter.

Disciple: That makes the conflict between the Devas and the

Asuras as represented in the Puranas very realistic even for our times. Because generally the Devas used to get beaten by the Asuras and run for protection to Mahakali or Rudra or Vishnu.

Sri Aurobindo: It is only the intervention of the Divine that can become effective, for in this Hitler and Stalin affair it is the descent of the whole vital world on this earth. That is what has puzzled most people, especially the intellectuals who were thinking in terms of idealism. They never expected such a thing; and now when it has come they don't understand how it has come and what is to be done. They deny the existence of the worlds beyond the physical and so they are bound to be perplexed.

ϑ

22 MAY 1940

Disciple: If the Asuric forces have incarnated in Hitler and others, are there none on the side of the Allies who incarnate the Divine forces

Sri Aurobindo: No, unfortunately there is none among them who can receive the Divine Force. They are all ordinary men. Mother also has not found anyone who can receive. Perhaps Marshal Petain might be able to receive but he is too old.

Disciple: Can Weygand receive?

Sri Aurobindo: I don't know anything about him. In such times if you have men who do not conform to scientific principles and rules, it is an advantage. These people assume things; with Hitler one can't assume anything. We require men with ideas and daring. Hore-Belisha would have been a very good choice on the English side. If they had put Lord Halifax for India, it would have been very easy to arrive at an understanding with the Congress.

Disciple: Jean Herbert, when he was here, was very hopeful that

there will be no war. The queer thing is that he believed that the dictators will get whatever they ask for if they ask for it strongly.

Sri Aurobindo: They would get France also if they ask strongly? Nivedita [*a French sadhika*] was saying that those French who have joined the war this time have no enthusiasm or idealism. If that is their mentality, they will be defeated. It is a stupid and tamasically sattwic quality.

Disciple: Have you seen Sir Arthur Hendersons book *The Failure of My Mission in Germany*?

Sri Aurobindo: I have seen a review of it in *New Statesman.*

Disciple: Jwalanti told me Henderson speaks of Hitler as a man possessed.

Sri Aurobindo: Does he say that?

Disciple: She described the condition of her friend's son, a young diplomat who had been to Berlin. His people could not recognise him when he returned. He told them that in Germany he had felt as if he were put inside a metallic bomb and every minute somebody was putting more pressure on it so that he couldn't breathe freely.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, practically the whole atmosphere in Germany seems to be dominated by these forces. The young men are actually taught to be devilish. In Poland, when the Poles complained about cruelty by the German soldiers people said, "Don't complain, this is nothing. Wait till the Nazis come to power here; then you will know what cruelty is."

23 MAY 1940

State Socialism was introduced today in England.

Disciple: It must be due to the pressure of the Labour members.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. It is a revolutionary step; but for the war it would not have passed, because all along English history has been a fight for individual liberty and this is a negation of all that.

Disciple: It must also be taken to prevent war profiteering.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes.

After some time the talk turned to the prophecy of a setback to Hitler in May.

Disciple: Still eight days to go. If they recapture Narvik, then...

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, then we can begin to think that the Allies will win. But they want to take Narvik without the loss of a single man!

Disciple: But they have again changed their position against the Germans, it is said. What does it mean?

Sri Aurobindo: Obviously it means retreat. They want to fight non-violently, like Gandhi — without shedding a drop of blood.

Disciple: Gandhi's idea of Ahimsa is that he should get killed.

Disciple: Yes, he has almost a passion for being killed.

Disciple: When Vidyarthi was murdered by a Muslim, Gandhi said he was very sorry he himself was not killed like that. He looks to the day when one man will be cutting his head, another beating him with a lathi, and a third attacking him with something else.

Disciple: That is not all. When he is beaten like that he must have not only no ill-feeling but love for them.

Sri Aurobindo: And not a sense of obligation also? And say thank you very much for fulfilling my life's ideal, gentlemen?

♉

15 JUNE 1940

Over the last two days Sri Aurobindo had said that in one sense one can say history is repeating itself because the Graeco-Roman civilisation was destroyed by the Germanic hordes and today it is again the Germans who are trying to destroy the centre of European culture, for Paris has been the centre of modern civilisation for three centuries. The unfortunate thing is that the whole world is bound up with modern civilisation — even China and Japan. The Asura working behind Hitler has been giving him remarkably accurate guidance; he knows what is possible. That is why Hitler doesn't listen to reason but only waits for the voice. Till now it has guided him correctly. The only mistake he seems to have made is to think that when he attacked Poland, England and France would not declare war. Otherwise he has a direct guidance which Napoleon could not get.

About the surrender of Paris Sri Aurobindo wondered how the French had allowed the Germans to enter it without fighting. Even if the old civilisation is to be destroyed, it was better to have defended it heroically.

Disciple: Haradhan says that France will ultimately triumph.

Sri Aurobindo: It is not unlikely.

Disciple: Do Asuras have the power of vision?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, they have. Vision is not only on the spiritual level. It can be also on the vital and the subtle-physical planes, and can be very accurate.

Disciple: Can Asuras know about their own end?

Sri Aurobindo: No.

Disciple: It is like the astrologers who know of others' death but

not their own.

Sri Aurobindo: No, some can predict it accurately. There are instances in which the exact hour and minute is known. A case in point is that of Louis XI and his astrologer. When invited by his enemy Charles of Burgundy, Louis consulted his astrologer who said it was safe to go; yet Louis was imprisoned. He summoned the astrologer after telling his guards that if, when sending the astrologer away, he shouted, "There is a Heaven above us!" they must kill the astrologer, but not if he said, "Go in peace." The astrologer came to know of the plot, and when Louis asked if he knew the hour of his own death, he said it was 24 hours before Louis's. And so Louis took great care to see that he was not killed. It is said that years later, Louis died exactly 24 hours after the astrologer. This story is narrated by Scott in his novel *Quentin Durward.*

Disciple: Adwaitananda met a sadhak at Tiruvannamallai who argued with him that knowledge need not be accompanied by power.

Sri Aurobindo: If knowledge gave power, all intellectuals would have power, and really they have none. (*Laughter*)

It all depends on whether you lean on the side of the Witness Purusha or Power or both. If a man realises the Sat aspect, the Pure Being, he may have no power, because Pure Being does not act — it is not impotent but it may remain quiescent. On the other hand, there are spiritual people who have little knowledge but much power. And even in the case of those who realise the power aspect, it may not always be used.

II

17 JUNE 1940

News came that Petain proposed to negotiate an armistice with Hitler. It came as a surprise and everybody thought France was lost. Curiously enough, today was Paul Richard's birthday.

Sri Aurobindo: How could these heroes of the last war propose a truce? How can they expect anything honourable from Hitler? It would be the end of France.

Disciple: France has become decadent. When someone showed French coins to the Mother, she remarked: "What coins are these? They are the coins of a ruined country." It was after the Munich Pact.

Sri Aurobindo: I didn't know that. But when France did not stand by her treaty with Czechoslovakia, Mother had said that France was condemned.

Disciple: Do you foresee all the possibilities connected with the war?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, but we do not accept anything as absolutely certain or inevitable. They can be changed.

Disciple: I quite understand how it must be impossible for France to continue the war. They began without enthusiasm for the war, but even afterwards Government servants are seen actually wishing for such a peace! There is a soldier in the hospital who even says, "What is the use of fighting? for whom?" etc.

Sri Aurobindo: That is the decadent mind, when men think more of their safety and comfortable living and want to live in peace at any price.

Disciple: Is it not the action of the law of Karma that has fallen upon France?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, it is their Karma, but if they can go through the suffering and pay the price they can wipe off their Karma. But if

they give up the struggle it means they are gone.

Disciple: Will the English continue after the French have given up?

Sri Aurobindo: I think they will. At least they have not been known to give up so easily in the past, unless they have changed considerably. In the light of this, one admires the resistance of Poland and Finland. In spite of very bad leadership and inadequate equipment they fought bravely to the end and did not ask for terms. I don't think that they are lost.

II

18 JUNE 1940

Churchill's proposal was out for an Anglo-French Union.

Disciple: There was panic last evening. Everybody thinks France has given up, but in fact it is due to various causes that French soldiers are not fighting. They think in terms of communism and capitalism, etc.

Sri Aurobindo: They will have no chance under Hitler. There are only two chances: either Hitler dies soon and his work is undone, or these people last it out.

Churchill's proposal is good. The English do not like an idea merely for the sake of the idea. They have a feeling for what is possible, what is necessary. They have a great flexibility in politics and they have shown it by declaring State Socialism, and this Anglo-French Union is another move.

(*He also said, in between, that the British Labour Party had secured rights for the workers, but had not been strong in pressing the claim of India upon the present cabinet*)

Disciple: The prospect of a joint English and French Parliament

is very humorous.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, the French members will fight among themselves and the English will shake their heads and say, "Most unparliamentary!"

Disciple: Can the French yet resist? And if they give up can the English resist?

Sri Aurobindo: Why not? That is why we Indians cannot win. We always think that if you are defeated you have to give up. It is not like that. The greatness lies in not giving up the struggle and refusing to accept the defeat as final. You can defeat me any number of times but I am not going to give up.

The British have stood out alone against victorious powers in the past.

If the French decide to resist, they have the Navy and the Air Force intact, and their colonial army and colonials too. From there they can resist till they win.

The Belgian and Dutch Governments have not given up. Why should the French? And even if the Anglo-French Union does not become permanent they can have a very powerful federation with Holland, Belgium, Norway, Poland, Czechoslovakia and they can request India to join it voluntarily as an equal partner. That would obviate the conservative fear about making a sweeping change in India. They have always a fear that it is against tradition, too much out of the way. No nation can be great on the principle of maintaining its existence, unless it stands for some great cause or idealism or something else great.

II

19 JUNE 1940

When P referred to Churchill's speech yesterday explaining that the

French really lost the battle in Flanders, because they lost 25 divisions, and said that it comes to about three lakhs at the most, Sri Aurobindo said that French divisions are smaller, of about 15 or 18 thousand each. So P wondered what happened to the other 17 lakhs.

Sri Aurobindo: That is what I don't understand — how they can complain of want of men. Chamberlain and Daladier both seem to be the same. I do not know whether it is stupidity or treachery.

Disciple: Somebody raised a complaint that the British were not sending sufficient men.

Sri Aurobindo: You must remember that Britain is not a country with conscription. They have not got a big standing army. It takes time to prepare and equip soldiers, and yet they sent four lakhs with the best equipment they could give. This is not a small force for England, and then they were obliged to retreat and bring back three and a half lakhs.

Disciple: It seemed that after the fall of Paris the British have sent four lakhs of men.

Sri Aurobindo: No, there seems to be some confusion. They could not have sent so many because before the Reynaud cabinet resigned Churchill said that he had sent three divisions already and would be sending one lakh in all by the end of June. But as usual these over-sensitive French military men in their over-suspiciousness did not believe Churchill's words.

Disciple: The new cabinet is out-and-out a rightist cabinet.

Sri Aurobindo: It does not even represent the whole of France.

Disciple: The retreat has become a rout.

Sri Aurobindo: Because the army has no organisation left and the morale was broken by the fall of Paris and also by the breakdown of the peace talks. Everybody thinks, "What is the use of dying today if tomorrow they are going to conclude peace."

There is no heart in the fighting.

Disciple: At that rate they will find after some time that they can't oppose Hitler.

Sri Aurobindo: It is as Mother says: Hitler does not want to give his terms before he destroys the French army. It seems to be the same condition that was there in the time of Napoleon III when France lost the war. It is due to party quarrels and jealousies. Politicians trying to meddle in the government instead of doing their own work. Their dissatisfaction with England is quite meaningless because Churchill clearly said that it would take some months to make up for the loss of materials in Flanders. It is no use pitting an ill-equipped army against the Germans.

Gamelin was a fraud and Weygand has not proved exceptional. If a military genius had arisen he could have saved the situation. It seems Hitler is going to ask France for her colonies that are near British possessions. In that case he may ask for Pondicherry.

Disciple: Does he know anything about Pondicherry?

Sri Aurobindo: Oh yes. The Germans know everything. Their children are taught the most wonderful details about the cities and even villages in England and France. They have got a school where they train future governors for England. So far as organisation is concerned there are only two races who cannot be surpassed: the Germans and the Japanese. In the last war they found maps in Germany of English villages in which even the position of trees and houses were indicated.

There was a reference to Hiranyagarbha which P took to Sri Aurobindo. He had explained, two days back, that Hiranyagarbha has nothing to do with Supermind. Besides Hiranyagarbha is a Being, while Supermind is not.

Disciple: It is a plane of being or a plane of consciousness. A world of its own.

Sri Aurobindo: Exactly so. Hiranyagarbha refers to the universal subjective, while the Virat is the universal objective. In the Rigveda there is only one reference to Hiranyagarbha.

(*Then P read out hymn 121, Mandala X.*)

Sri Aurobindo: Here Hiranyagarbha is a God. He is a creator.

Disciple: There is a hymn (*Rigveda II:12*), which is similar in wording and conception but which refers to Indra.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, there are several hymns in which various Gods like Agni, Indra, etc., are spoken of as creators. But it is not the same thing as what I call the "Supermind as a creator". The word in the old philosophy which can convey the idea of the Supermind as a creator is *prajñā*, the Knower. He creates out of himself. Prajna is spoken of as superconscient because it is above the ordinary mental consciousness and ordinarily one enters it in Samadhi, unless one brings it down into the ordinary consciousness. The Supermind also is superconscient but that is because it has not yet been attained. Hiranyagarbha is equivalent to Taijas, while Prajna is prior to that. I remember that in jail we used to call one fellow who had a strong imagination Hiranyagarbha, that is to say, man of strong dreams.

(*Then P showed Sri Aurobindo two references from Sāmaveda: the second hymn of Mandala III, in which Hiranyagarbha is derived from Rudra, and the fourth hymn of Mandala II in which Kapila is said to be Hiranyagarbha*.)

Sri Aurobindo: Both of these are not clear in their meaning of Hiranyagarbha. Besides they are quite different in their sense from the Hiranyagarbha of the Rigveda.

II

22 JUNE 1940

The talk was about the report of a military correspondent that the French thought in terms of fortress and positional warfare. They did not believe in the importance of tanks and aeroplanes even though they knew that tanks had decided their victory last time.

Sri Aurobindo: And so Gamelin had to go! He was so much accustomed to the idea of fortress that he did not know what to do when the Germans came in through Flanders! Gamelin and Daladier are both so evidently weak that one is surprised how they were regarded as strong men. Government after government in France appointed Daladier as Foreign Minister, while he did nothing to prepare for war, and nor did Chamberlain. You have only to look at their photographs at the Munich Conference where you can see a fierce, cunning, and crafty Hitler, while Daladier appears like one who can be broken in no time, and Chamberlain looks like a cunning fool who thinks he is winning his point, while really he is not.

There was a Nazi incident in Uruguay.

Disciple: Will that be an excuse for America to join the war?

Sri Aurobindo: If it is true that Germans have given a threat and the Uruguay Government shoots some of the Nazis and the Germans declare war on Uruguay, then the Monroe Doctrine will come in full force. But I don't suppose it will go to that extent.

(*About armistice discussion between France and Germany Sri Aurobindo said that if they ask for capitulation of navy and air force then it will be very hard for England*)

Sri Aurobindo: The English have their air force but do they have sufficient tanks? A big invasion of England seems unlikely. If the English can last till the end of the year then Germany may be defeated.

Russia is very foolish in putting pressure on Turkey to keep out of the war. There is bound to be a clash between Russia and Germany about the Balkans and at that time if the English are defeated there will be no chance of blockade.

♊

23 JUNE 1940

On hearing the terms of the French armistice which included putting all the French resources at the disposal of Hitler, Sri Aurobindo said it is an "act of basest treachery". When he heard about the Rumanian Government becoming Nazi he said, "The whole world seems to have been taken in by a wave of selfishness, cowardice and treachery."

♊

25 JUNE 1940

Disciple: We say everything that happens happens according to the Divine Will, i.e. nothing happens without it. So the defeat of France happened according to the Divine Will, i.e. according to Sri Aurobindo's will!

Sri Aurobindo: "Everything" does not mean every individual act or event. You can say Sri Aurobindo's will on another level of consciousness willed it. For instance, you can't say that I willed to break my leg!

People think of God as a kind of super-dictator. The Divine Will lays down general lines — but in the actual Play it consents to limitations that are self-imposed. It has also to pay the price in the play of forces. Otherwise you can argue that Rama willed that Sita

may be taken away by Ravana! And that Christ knew that he had to be crucified for the work and yet something in him wished it might be otherwise!

So, it is not all my 'will'; it is the Karma of France and England also that is working.

I am almost getting sympathy and admiration for the British, which I never had before. They are standing up alone against Hitler's power without allies — just as they did in Napoleon's time.

Disciple: You wrote in a letter to Dilip that your will never fails.

Sri Aurobindo: No. I did not say that. What I said was that I have not seen my will fail — so far as the major events of the world were concerned — until now.

Disciple: What events?

Sri Aurobindo: For instance, Ireland's freedom. Also, I wanted Alsace Lorraine to go to France. They were not fulfilled at the time when I willed. Many were fulfilled when I no longer wanted them. For instance, I wanted to break the British Empire. Now Hitler wants to do it. But I don't want it now, as it would mean the triumph of Hitler. Wherever he has gone, he has destroyed the higher values of life. If I want that the British must not be destroyed it is not because I like the British Empire, but because I see that it would push back the work tremendously.

Disciple: Doesn't the Divine Will foresee things?

Sri Aurobindo: The Divine foresees everything, lays down the lines of their development, and allows the play of forces to work them out, and in that play of forces it consents to certain things. There is not a fixed will for each individual event, and the result may not lead to a material utility but there are other utilities too.

Disciple: Is the Divine limited?

Sri Aurobindo: Everyone who descends for a spiritual purpose has to be limited. Of course such a limitation is self-imposed, — he

consents to the rules of the play of forces and works through that play. This may include running away — like Krishna who fled from the *Kāla Yavana.*

Disciple: Now Hitler is giving bread to German workers.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, he says they are without food and he is feeding them. It is the Asura spreading his influence like that. He promises that he will bring peace, a new world order, etc.

Disciple: The new order would be that the British declare Dominion Status for India and pass some parts to Germany.

Disciple: Anderson in England has invented an efficient air-raid shelter which is about the size of a sentry's cabin. It is supposed to be proof against any explosion.

Sri Aurobindo: Now the greatest preoccupation of human beings seems to be to find means of destroying each other and of escaping destruction. Man is said to be a rational animal but there is very little reason in these activities. It is the same kind of ingenuity as the animal has; it is only an extension of animal ingenuity. Formerly men used to kill with swords and spears and other weapons.

Disciple: But they could not do it so well as is done now. Now they are spending lakhs of rupees for just one machine or bomb.

Disciple: In his article in the *Harijan*, R. Gregg strongly advocates the adoption by European nations of the Wardha scheme of the Khadi production by the Charkha.

Sri Aurobindo: But they were also destroying each other even when they were using Charkha in the past!

Disciple: Perhaps not on such a large scale.

Sri Aurobindo: There are cases of the entire population of a city being killed by their primitive methods.

Disciple: Yes, in Baghdad, for instance, Chengiz Khan put up a tower of one lakh human skulls.

♊

27 JUNE 1940

Disciple: In the 27th chapter of *The Life Divine,* the publishers, in consultation with a professor of English, have changed "founded in" to "founded on" in the final proof.

Sri Aurobindo: I have used the same expression in the previous paragraph. They have already suggested "on" and I have not accepted the suggestion, for I have used "in" here purposely.

These people think that they know English better than I do. They are habituated to use current phrases and words in their usual sense but they do not know that a good writer does not always use current phrases and words in their usual meaning.

Disciple: Oh, but they did it after consulting a professor.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, but the professor is an Indian. He is not an Englishman. It is these people who have learnt the language that want to use current phrases. As Stephen Phillips said, the English language is like a woman who will love you only if you take liberties with her. Dinshaw Wacha sent me one of his books, and on every page I found forty such worn-out expressions, what they call cliches, and all Indian papers were praising his English. Perhaps an Englishman would have said, "What a horrible style!"

♋

21 JULY 1940

There was a reference to Rajagopalachari's article about the necessity of force for maintaining a State.

Disciple: Bluntschli in his book called *The State* puts it down as a fundamental principle. Every state is founded on force. President

Wilson in his book also maintains, a little apologetically, that all human states are founded on force.

Sri Aurobindo: Of course, so long as man is not cowed down or has not evolved beyond his present condition and become too high to use force, force will be indispensable.

Disciple: In the Supramental creation will there be any force?

Sri Aurobindo: No. Because there you are supposed to go beyond human conditions. But for the ordinary human purposes the State is bound to employ force. Only there are two types of institutions, one which employs force pure and simple and another which is based on agreement and force is employed only to maintain the agreement. That is the difference between democracy and dictatorship. The weakness of democracy is that its rule is based on majority consent, so there will always be a minority that is not satisfied with the condition of things. And if the minority loses the hope of becoming the majority it may resort to force.

ॐ

3 AUGUST 1940

In a letter to Dilip, Krishnaprem expressed his opinions and ideas about the present war. His points were: 1) The war has already been fought out and its issue decided on the inner planes. 2) Mankind is responsible for the rise of the Asuric forces. 3) Each one must fight the lower forces and side with the Divine in himself.

Sri Aurobindo read the letter and said: "It is quite right to say that the struggle between the forces has been worked out on other planes before it is projected here."

Disciple: He quotes the Gita where Sri Krishna says that the Kauravas were already killed.

Disciple: So the result is already decided.

Sri Aurobindo: I would not admit, as he seems to admit, that everything is fixed. Of course the issue has been decided by the Divine and there can be no change in that. But nobody knows that decision of the Divine. And when there is a struggle between the forces it is always possible to change the balance of forces. True, things are decided above and happen in the physical afterwards, but not exactly in the same way. There can be a variation. Of course, there can be no variation in what is decided by the Supreme Vision.

In a way it is quite true that mankind has made the world what it is.

Disciple: He seems to say that Hitler is a result of tendencies which men have been harbouring in themselves. He forgets that the Being behind Hitler may also be responsible for spreading his influence.

Disciple: He feels that England will not be defeated in this war because the English have some purpose to fulfil in the world. So long as they do that, they will not be defeated.

Sri Aurobindo: That's true, though certain forces have been working for the destruction of the Brirish Empire. I myself once worked for it but didn't consider that such forces will arise. But it is quite possible to change that action because if the same result can be achieved in a different manner, then its destruction is not necessary. I would not have minded any result to the British Empire if its destruction did not mean victory for Hitler. But that changes the whole aspect. Krishnaprem puts it in a rather absolute way and does not give sufficient importance to the physical world, or recognise that by a change in the balance of forces the higher decisions can be changed.

Disciple: Is this not all due to the necessity of a new world order?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, evidently. The question is what is that new world order going to be, and how is it to be brought about. He

speaks of the psychic attitude to be adopted by everyone. That change is useful for attaining much higher spiritual results. There have always been a small number of people who have embodied that change, but I don't know how that can change world conditions as a whole. Or perhaps by psychic he means mental and vital changes. Even then, I don't know how they can come about if Hitler wins. For the present, everybody seems to be taking refuge in cowardice and trying to save his own skin. If the change desired is to come after Hitler wins, then perhaps it would be after great suffering and through reactions on the part of men to that oppression, or even it might not come at all, or come after the Pralaya. Whereas if by changing the balance of forces the British Empire can be saved and it can win, then the new world order might take place more quiedy and the mental and vital changes necessary would take place without much disturbance and so much destruction.

Disciple: Do you mean that the Supreme's decision can be different from the decision of the subtle worlds?

Sri Aurobindo: Why not? But between the Supreme's Vision and its realisation here, there are many possible variations. In fact, if you speak of destiny, then you must know that there are different layers of destiny. There is, for instance, what the astrologers call the destiny in the physical. There is also a destiny in the vital. By bringing the vital forces into play the destiny in the physical can be changed. So also by bringing the mental forces into play — though it is more difficult — what seems to be the vital destiny can be changed. That is why astrologers rarely prove themselves right because they look at the physical graph of things. Before the Vision of the Supreme is realised on the physical plane there can be variations due to the play of forces on the mental and vital and physical planes. On each of these planes a certain play of forces may show as if the destiny was in favour of one or the other group of forces. And this balance can be changed.

Disciple: But if it is in the Supreme Vision, then the new order is bound to come, is it not?

Disciple: But at present before the Supreme has a chance, there are many others who are ready with their own ideas of the new order.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, everybody seems to be busy with his own world order, and nobody knows about the decision of the Supreme.

Disciple: But how can you say nobody knows? You know! You have said that the Supramental descent is bound to come.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, but we have not yet become supramental. I know the descent will come, but I have not fixed the date for it. It may be tomorrow, I don't know.

Disciple: It seems that the Mother said to someone that the Light will descend when there will be darkness all around and no possibility in sight for man.

Sri Aurobindo: Those were not her own words. She was only repeating an ancient prophecy.

Disciple: I suppose the world is sufficiently dark even now, for it is only England that is standing in the way of Hitler's triumph.

Sri Aurobindo: Did you not see the Mother's prayer for this year? It is quite clear. At any rate, those who received it in France perhaps know now what it meant.

♌

18 AUGUST 1940

There was a talk about the music of Bhishmadev. N started the topic by stating that Tagore long ago started a campaign against classical music saying that it was dead. The reason he gave was that classical music was only a performance of mere technique and

cleverness; there was no soul in it. Tagore therefore started emphasising the importance of words and their meaning in music. He almost said that words were preferable to notes. Even Dilip strongly supported this argument of Tagore in his articles.

Sri Aurobindo: If it was only the exercise and exhibition of technique and mere skill on the part of the classical musician, then there was no real music in it.

Disciple: For musical appreciation the sound value, the rhythm, harmony, etc. are quite enough. There is no need of words or meaning for the appreciation of music.

Sri Aurobindo: Like all other arts music has its own medium which is sound; it stands by itself. If it depended on words or on poetry then it would be poetical music but not pure music.

Disciple: The classical musicians were only performing the gymnastics of sound and, Tagore said, that there was need of fine and beautiful words for music.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, but if it is gymnastics of sound it is not music. Music then would be only a commentary on words!

Disciple: They say that the remedy for reviving music is to give value to word and meaning.

Sri Aurobindo: The conditions are such because classical music has degenerated but it does not mean that it should not be revived; and the remedy is not to give value to words or poetry, but to restore the soul of music. If words are indispensable to the appreciation of music, then how can an Englishman hear Italian music and appreciate it?

Disciple: Tagore is very particular about the tune of his own songs and nobody is allowed to make any change in the notation of his songs. That is why Dilip does not sing his songs.

Sri Aurobindo: I believe Tagore is not much of a musician, is he?

Disciple: By no means! Because he happens to be a great man in

other things and has a big name, therefore nobody opposes his claims in fields where he does not know anything.

Sri Aurobindo: It is more or less like his paintings.

Disciple: Not so bad nor so extravagant perhaps.

Disciple: Dilip also thinks that beautiful words are necessary for music.

Sri Aurobindo: That is because he is more of a singer than a musician. Singing is an art by itself.

Disciple: Appreciation of pure music also requires training.

Disciple: Everybody cannot appreciate or form a critical judgment about music. The ear has to be trained and also the aesthetic faculty. One can see in Bhishmadev and Biren that they have not merely technical perfection and rhythm but also they enter into the spirit of the music. And there one can see that it is the notes, the musical value of notes, that create the atmosphere, specially in the case of Biren who merely by playing on a string instrument succeeds in creating a fine atmosphere.

Sri Aurobindo: If words were indispensable to music then most of the European music — and the best of it is without words — would not be called music at all. In pure music words are absolutely not necessary. If you can't have pure music without words, then one can also say that one cannot paint a subject which is not literary. It is fortunate that European music has not suffered the same fate as modernist painting and poetry; the modernists have not been able to spoil European music. It is difficult to have cubism in music.

Disciple: It is difficult to throw about cubes of sound because they are sure to hurt the ear.

Beethoven's symphonies are only musical notations and played with the violin and piano. One of the reasons why North Indians fail, or find it difficult, to appreciate South Indian music is because

they are prevented by words, and also perhaps because it is more intellectual. When you hear Bhishmadev's singing you see that he is conscious only of the notes and their musical value, not merely of the words and their meaning. Whatever he wants to express in his music, whether an emotion or a state of consciousness, he does it through notes and not words. His very gestures show that he is working with notes.

Disciple: Some people say that Dilip's music is more spiritual while that of Bhishmadev and others is not spiritual.

Disciple: That is because Dilip is singing religious songs and Bhajans.

Disciple: Can pure music be spiritual?

Sri Aurobindo: Of course.

Disciple: What I have found in Dilip's music is that the atmosphere he creates is not due to his music but to something else, perhaps due to his personality or the being that is in him. I have also seen that if one goes to his music with the idea of expecting sound values and rhythms he is likely to be disappointed.

Disciple: So far as the spiritual atmosphere is concerned it does not require a great musician to produce it. A spiritual person singing a very ordinary song can create a spiritual atmosphere.

Sri Aurobindo: That's true. That is why I don't grant the contention of the modernist poet who says that in order to appreciate his rhythm you must hear the poem recited by him. A clever elocutionist can make much out of a commonplace poem. He can produce rhythm where there is none in the original.

Disciple: Some people say that they like Dilip's poetry when he recites it but they cannot appreciate it when they read it themselves. It is also difficult to appreciate his poetry unless one knows the rhythms and new turns which he has introduced, because his rhythms are quite different from those of Tagore.

Sri Aurobindo: What I have found in Dilip's poetry is that it is mental poetry connected with the Bengali poetry of the pre-Tagorian era. Perhaps it is due to his father's influence which was also intellectual. What I mean is that Tagore introduced a new element of feeling and imagination in Bengali poetry; as he is a genius his poetry is beautiful but much of what is written under Tagore's influence is wishy-washy stuff, it is poetry without any backbone. There is no sound experience behind it. Even in Tagore you find that his idea is diffused into seventy or eighty lines, yet it does not come out clearly though the idea is there. In pre-Tagorian poetry they had clear intellectual ideas to express and they expressed them poetically. Dilip's poetry has two things: the subject and the treatment. Generally the subject is an idea which he develops, an intellectual thing which he expresses in poetic form; and his technique is a departure both from Tagore and the old tradition.

Disciple: In novel-writing it is found that Sharat Chatterji was far superior to Tagore as a story writer.

Disciple: Tagore criticised Dilip's story on the ground that there was very little action in it. In fact he said that the story must have a story, not mere discussions. But in his own stories there is very little action: they are also what are called intellectual stories.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, I found in Dilip's story, when I turned over the pages, that somebody or other was talking on every page.

Disciple: Or sometimes there are long letters in the novel and interminable replies.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, all sorts of things that are not native to the purpose of the novel are being put into it by the moderns. So, instead of writing a pamphlet they write a novel, instead of delivering a sermon they write a story — they write a story even for journalistic purposes! It is like Shaw's dramas. All his characters are meant only to represent different sides of the questions which he

takes up in his drama.

ଣ

15 SEPTEMBER 1940

Disciple: Has the individual no reality except as a puppet?

Sri Aurobindo: That is Shankara's stand.

Disciple: Another question is: If the Divine is already there and does everything then why do Yoga? Because Sri Krishna says to Arjuna in the Gita that you have only to become the Nimitta, the instrument. So the Christian's criticism is that the individual becomes meaningless, without any justification or fulfilment. The Gita is preaching pure mechanism or unconsciousness.

Sri Aurobindo: But the Gita does not say that you are "compelled" to become the Nimitta. It says "Bhava" — become. It does not say that you have no existence except as the Nimitta. Even if Arjuna does not become the Nimitta, Sri Krishna says that he will do the work in his own way. Even when you find that the Divine has decreed the result, it is the *result* that is decreed but *not* the Nimitta, that is, anything else could have been the Nimitta.

The Individual, the Universal and the Transcendental are the One in different positions. "I am the Lord in each," says the Gita.

Disciple: If the Divine does everything then we have to conclude that ignorance is unreal.

Sri Aurobindo: Ignorance is not unreal; it is real, that is to say, there is a Truth that corresponds to it.

Disciple: The aim of Sadhana is freedom from ego, from the bondage of ego. What is to be done after that?

Sri Aurobindo: It is the first indispensable step. But there are many possibilities after that freedom. For example, he may remain

confined to his own nature or to the apparent ego in nature, though free. Or he may open equally to cosmic forces and act as Bala, Jada, Pishacha or Unmatta. Or he may be one with the Divine and act and would also be free not to act. In case he acts, he is the individual centre of the cosmic forces for Divine action. He is one with the Divine, yet remains a separate self— yet free. The cosmic forces would be available to him for Divine action.

♏

28 NOVEMBER 1940

Letters from Kabul and from Ella Millard: change in attitude towards Gabriel; effective representation of Ella.

A copy of Gandhi's will or political will, spoken orally and taken down and distributed to Gandhi Seva Sangh, was brought by Abhaya Deva Sharma. It was read out to Sri Aurobindo.

The following are notes of Sri Aurobindo's comments today:

Sri Aurobindo: Something in Gandhi takes delight in suffering for its own sake. Even the prospect of suffering seems to please him! Though he puts in a lot of ethics for his justification, the fact is that something in him enjoys suffering.

Secondly, if he knows that to the British Government fifty Gandhis would not matter, what does he propose then to achieve politically by his fast? And he also knows that the British people are not even going to consider the possibility of Ahimsa.

It is the Christian idea that has taken hold of him. Besides, he seems to think that after him his theory and creed of non-violence will continue. I don't think so. A few people will be there, but anything like a wide-scale influence like that of his personality does not seem possible.

I don't object to a world order but I object to Hitler's world order. The book *Psychology of Social Development* must remain unpublished so long as the war lasts because I must know whether Hitler goes up or goes down. Our European publications have been stopped on account of the war.

My contribution to the War Fund cannot be called my taking part in politics! It was made in view of the much wider issues about which I have spoken of in my letters — the issues of human culture and individual and national liberty — and as the English are the only race that stand up for it, I support them.

The English won't be acting according to justice? But why should they? Which nation acts on the principles of justice? How can we expect them to fulfil a standard which we ourselves can't satisfy?

What is justice after all? To the socialist, denial of all property and the liquidation of capitalism is justice. To the capitalist justice is something else.

The Indian problem has been very badly bungled by all, Jinnah and the Congress and the Mahasabha. They have not been able to play their cards well. That is why they are losing the game.

The Congress is asking for freedom of expression, but it does not give its own members the freedom to express their ideas if they are against its official policy!

There are two ways of securing freedom. One is by force, by revolution. But that cannot succeed so long as we have the Jinnahs and others. The only course open is compromise. There you have to give and take — provided you know your opponent. Generally the English do not want to go to the extreme, to be continuously repressing people. After a time they come to a compromise.

Generally, they arrange the bargain in such a way that they gain in the compromise. They want to be respected. They don't like to be called bad.

Fasting and Satyagraha in order to change the heart of the opponent is absurd. If it changes anything, it may be only the mind, not the heart. What the Congress can do is to exert pressure and secure some concessions. It can't succeed if it challenges the very existence of the other force. A man may not like to face the consequences and so he will give in without any change of heart. For instance, Gandhi succeeded in settling the Ahmedabad mill-workers demands because the owners did not want to earn public obloquy. So they gave concessions to his demands. But suppose instead of some demand for amelioration he had asked them to hand over the mills to the workers, he would not have succeeded.

The English have a constitutional mind. Once they give their word, they don't go back upon it. They don't want anyone else to walk into India when they walk out of it. They are afraid of that happening if they leave India now. It would certainly mean civil war and any other power could walk into India. They have announced that they would grant Dominion Status, which amounts to Independence except in one or two matters like defence and foreign affairs.

They don't care for world opinion about India because the opinion they consider important is American opinion. But as all are afraid of Hitler, no one will speak against England for her Indian policy at present. And also they are not quite wrong when they say that the Indians must settle their own differences.

The Lucknow Pact [*of 1916*] has proved a great blunder. The Mahommedans want to rule India.

If Gandhi undertakes his fast for self-purification or for a spiritual end it is one thing, but how can he gain political power by it? It is only the British Government who gives way to such pressure. Against Germany, or Japan, or Russia, or even France, it would have no chance.

(*In connection with the attempt on Vallabhbhai's life after the Amreli and Rajkot affairs*): Virawal is a match for Gandhi.

Going to jail is useful because it can help a nation in consolidating and organising itself. If the programme is fully carried out, ultimately, the ruling power, if it is oppressive, can be thrown out.

♏

29 NOVEMBER 1940

Kasturbhai's Arvind Mills of Ahmedabad was using Sri Aurobindo's pictures on its products without permission and without paying any consideration. Seeing one of the pictures Sri Aurobindo said, "The other one we saw made me look like a criminal. This one makes me look like an imbecile — not only in the eyes but around the mouth too. How can they do such things?"

It was represented to him that legal action could be taken against the Mills, but he did not wish to press that aspect of the matter.

♐

31 DECEMBER 1940

Disciple: On what does receptivity depend?

Sri Aurobindo: On quietude, openness and wideness.

One cant receive if he is disturbed and also what he receives

can't be effective without quietude. Quietude means quietude of the mind, the vital and the physical. The most difficult quietude is that of the inconscient.

One can develop openness by will and instil quietude also by throwing away all disturbance through aspiration, will, effort, etc.

1941-1943

4 JANUARY 1941

Sri Aurobindo: The Inconscient, what is the Inconscient? There is nothing below the Inconscient. It is from the Inconscient that Matter takes form. Everything has its basis in the Inconscient. As at present the work is going on in the Inconscient the difficulties arise from there — various diseases, etc.

The Inconscient is the stuff of the material world. It has its own power. It has concrete thoughts and ideas of its own. In order to combat them, one has to bring down a concrete Higher Force.

Disciple: What about "In Tune with the Infinite" in which R. W. Trine says: "I am infinite power. It is pouring and pouring into me."

Sri Aurobindo: What about it? Have you tried it?

Disciple: Yes, but I am as I was!

Sri Aurobindo: It looks very much like Coué's method.

Disciple: Can it work?

Sri Aurobindo: It is one way of opening the consciousness to the Force. I don't know if it can be successful throughout.

Disciple: You said to D that his keeping the attitude "I am the child of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo — nothing can oppose me" was quite proper.

Sri Aurobindo: That is the central faith which one is required to have in this Yoga. If one can make that faith living in all the parts of the being then it would be quite all right. But the body says, "I have pain, I am suffering." It gets that power of ignorant ideas from the Inconscient. After completing the work in the Inconscient, the higher ranges of the Supramental consciousness would be brought down.

Disciple: There is a proposal for introducing *The Life Divine* as part of the course in Indian philosophy at the University level.

Sri Aurobindo: There is no objection to their doing that but it should not be compulsory. It should not be called a course in metaphysics and theology. *The Life Divine* is not theology!

Religious instructions should not be made compulsory. It does not necessarily develop spirituality; many people come to spiritual life through atheism. Religious instruction makes people narrow and sectarian. My objection to this scheme is that it is academic. It would lose all its life and become dry.

24 JANUARY 1941

The book *Life of Blake* published with many of his etchings, was shown to Sri Aurobindo. When he had been shown a few of the etchings some days back, he had not liked them very much.

Sri Aurobindo: They are merely dramatic and imaginative, rather than creations of true art. English art, in general, is more a result of mental imagination and therefore less satisfying than a work of art. In the "Death of a White Horse", the man looks like a violent angry old man, and the horse also looks wild and angry. I can't say I am impressed. If you compare Blake's work with the etchings of Rembrandt, you will see the difference between imaginative and true artistic work.

Disciple: Laurence Binyon's remarks in the preface say these works make an impression on the mind and don't so much appeal to the aesthetic senses, this is why you are disappointed when you see them again.

Sri Aurobindo: I am glad that Laurence agrees with me in this respect. I liked some of Blake's paintings, especially his

representation called "The Murder". It is a great work. You see that it represents murder. That is art.

In his poetry too, I was rather disappointed, except for the "Book of Thel" and some of his lyrics. But in general his poetry is not satisfying. It is like his etchings — you find them rhetorical. Durer also was a great etcher. The claim is that he used to paint or etch under inspiration. There is a realm of the vital, a romantic stretch, from which you can get these things. That period comes in Yoga also. But these things are not deep.

Disciple: The symbolism which he claims to have evolved for the complete explanation and interpretation of Christianity looked very elaborate to me.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, all that may be true, but it is not poetry. Middleton Murry and some others try to make so much of his poetry. It is the same when you find people trying to indicate that the names of certain countries stand for certain activities and certain contributions, and even the individual names of Gods.

ॐ

1941 OR 1942

Disciple: Does the feminine aspect of the Divine correspond to love, devotion and surrender?

Sri Aurobindo: No, not necessarily.

Disciple: Does not Sachchidananda love?

Sri Aurobindo: No, that is Krishnaprem's idea, perhaps.

Disciple: There is no reason to associate these qualities with the feminine aspect because he associates them with it.

Disciple: Receptivity includes these things; it is only a way of representing the inner life of the woman.

Sri Aurobindo: Because the female is passive, dependent (passively active) while the male is active, strong and self-reliant.

Disciple: The Vaishnavas look upon all souls as Gopis and so it seems to them that the feminine aspect in all corresponds to the element of love, devotion, etc. because they take this path.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, if you accept their idea. But that is not the whole idea.

Disciple: It cannot be said that the male aspect is without love, devotion and surrender.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, that is so. Only, it is of a different nature. A man, for instance, may be devoted to a woman but that is not the same thing as a woman's devotion to a man. And the Vaishnava outlook is not the whole of the feminine aspect. There are other qualities of the woman. Love is not the only attribute of the woman.

Disciple: The feminine aspect will also have to include the Tantric idea of the Shakti.

Sri Aurobindo: Quite so.

Disciple: But Krishnaprem says that both these sides, masculine and feminine, should be equal in all. Is it true?

Sri Aurobindo: What do you mean by true? If you mean true in fact, then you can say it is not true. He says it "should be" but "should be" is not "what is".

Disciple: Is the idea correct?

Sri Aurobindo: That is his idea that it should be so.

Disciple: Perhaps he means that in an ideal case these two should be equal.

Disciple: Krishnaprem also says that Grace and Tapasya are complementary, neither of them is to be stressed. Girish Ghosh used to say to Ramakrishna that he left everything for Ramakrishna to do for him; and it seems he was very much changed.

Disciple: What I heard is that he found at the end that he had not been able to give his burden over to Ramakrishna.

Sri Aurobindo: You mean he made no effort himself?

Disciple: I suppose so, or he found at the end that somehow or the other he had not left the whole thing to Ramakrishna.

Disciple: That means, if one has that living faith he can do without Tapasya. C here also says that he does not believe in Tapasya. He believes in Grace.

Disciple: But I do not mean that one should indulge in the lower nature while depending or believing in Grace. But otherwise I don't believe in Tapasya.

Disciple: Yes, but if we want something then we have to make some effort for that thing. Some effort is inevitable.

Sri Aurobindo (*to C*)**:** What do you mean by Tapasya?

Disciple (*not C*)**:** It has the sense of effort. For example, if the mind is wandering about then one has to make an effort to concentrate it. This is difficult.

Sri Aurobindo: That Tapas is something difficult is the popular idea — that it most often means sitting on nails, standing on the head, etc. But that is not correct. Tapas can be for something one likes or wants. You gather the energy for achieving the object.

Disciple: When one sits in meditation the mind is wandering about and one has to gather it. This is difficult.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, but something in you wants to do it. You want it, is it not so?

Disciple: It is the gathering of force of consciousness for a particular purpose.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, you gather up all the energy and put it on a particular point.

Disciple: Even for gathering up some effort is necessary.

Sri Aurobindo: If you want to achieve the object some effort will be necessary for achieving it.

Disciple: Some men find it easy to meditate for many hours.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, but that requires concentration of energy. All effort is not unpleasant. For instance, a man who plays cricket has to concentrate on the ball, bat, wicket, fielding, etc.

Disciple: That is comparatively easy because he finds interest in it.

Disciple: Another man may find that effort difficult.

Sri Aurobindo: It is said in the Upanishads that God created the world by Tapas. It was not that he found it difficult to create the world, but he had to make the effort.

Disciple: There is an instance given of concentration in which a lady goes about doing all sorts of work with a pitcher on her head. All the time her attention is concentrated on the pitcher.

In the case of the Gopis it was not that they had to make an effort to remember Krishna. They spontaneously fell in love with him and something in them was on fire. So when something in the being is touched like that, then concentration does not require effort or labour. One may concentrate for one thing and quite a different result may come — one may go to quite another line.

Sri Aurobindo: In my own case, Lele wanted me to get devotion and love and hear inner voices. Instead I got into the Silent Brahman Consciousness!

Disciple: And he prayed and tried to pull you into the other condition.

Disciple: I find in my case that with little effort on my part many things have dropped.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, that is because you, or something in you, wanted to drop these things.

Disciple: But there was no corresponding effort for results.

Sri Aurobindo: It may be so. It is not a question of correspondence: with a little effort something in you wants to drop it sincerely and then the Grace finds it easy to act. But all the same the effort is a contributory element. There are cases in which one goes on making efforts and yet no result comes and even the condition becomes worse. Then suddenly you find, when you have given up the effort, that the thing is done. It may be that the effort keeps up the resistance and when you give it up the resistance says, "This fellow has given up effort, so it is no use persisting."

≈

12 MARCH 1943

Disciple: T was such a nice person; her behaviour was very good.

Sri Aurobindo: It seemed so because you do not know what kind of a person she really was; you saw only the outside.

Disciple: But she was very disciplined.

Sri Aurobindo: No. She was very nice only so long as you did what she wanted. But otherwise she was a person least fitted for Sadhana. The family has a touch of madness. She was hysterical and also there was the dissatisfied sex. She *looked* very nice, for people generally think it is a sign of great advance when someone stops speaking to others or retires, like N-b and N, and even S. But these are people with small spiritual capacity. B yes, he had a great capacity, but it was his inordinate ego that came in his way.

Disciple: They say Mother is preparing twelve persons — like the apostles of Christ? — and then another twelve will be taken up, and so on.

Sri Aurobindo: I don't know it. Unless you believe that I hold

this as a State secret!

♓

26 MARCH 1943

On Srinivasa Iyengar's book on English poetry.

Sri Aurobindo: His judgments are not always sound and his quotations, though they seem striking at first, don't stand a second reading, so that they can't be taken as the best. For example, he speaks of Oscar Wilde, but he has not referred to the "Ballad of the Reading Gaol" which is one of the best things written in English. Also his estimate of Blunden's descriptions of nature — photographic and true to Nature perhaps — but it is very doubtful if they will survive.

Shakespeare you can go back to for a hundreth time. That is the test. T. S. Eliot will live, but only as a minor poet. The moderns have all got diction but it has no value without rhythm. They have no rhythm.

No one now reads Ben Jonson because people are no longer interested in him.

♈

16 APRIL 1943

General Toczyski, the Polish leader, came here through Umadevi, a Polish sadhika.

♈

17 APRIL 1943

General Toczyski saw the Mother at 3:30 for nearly an hour.

1. Synthesis of elements of different cultures.
2. Nearly 3,500 Polish refugees in India.
3. One or two hours to himself for reading this literature.

Sri Aurobindo: Such men will find great difficulties after the war because peace seems much more difficult — though war is difficult enough.

♈

18 APRIL 1943

In Russia before the war there were 18 million in prison — one tenth of the population! General Toczyski had been to Russia because he was a Socialist. What he saw disillusioned him. He was even imprisoned in Russia.

The spy system in Russia is very extensive. Each man who is somebody is watched by three men.

In the army one who does not fight has to face execution.

The American politicians want to retain their hold over North Africa if they can, to ensure payment of their money. They would even like to have Persia and Iraq.

So, the peace is not likely to be a very easy affair.

Spiritual cure — method described. Blue ray directed to the patient. Washes his own hands. Astral body seen near the patient.

♈

19 APRIL 1943

Spirit communication — desire to continue the family life of earth. There are such spirits who like a reproduction of the life on earth.

Get tired of the same wife or husband. Divorce suit in the other world. The husbands might ask if the wives are Satis!

Letter from Dilip, along with one from Krishnaprem, asking whether every time a Sadhak makes personal effort it can be said that it is to satisfy the ego.

Sri Aurobindo: No, it can be to subordinate the ego to the Divine. If it is to seek power or to satisfy some other impulse, then that personal effort may have an egoistic origin.

Disciple: Could one make a surrender to a Guru whose outer nature is imperfect?

Sri Aurobindo: It has nothing to do with any human standards — moral or mental. Most often it is the ego that says, "This fellow has got this defect, I wont surrender to him."

Disciple: But doesn't the very act of accepting someone as a Guru require some perception or feeling or experience of the Divine in the person?

Sri Aurobindo: Not necessarily. It may be only a belief in the Divinity of the Guru. That way it can be argued that God is imperfect because the exterior working in this world is full of imperfection, ignorance, suffering, etc. All these things do not count. The question is whether the Divinity in the Guru can awaken the Divine in the disciple.

Vivekananda was conscious of Ramakrishna's shortcomings and his mind was very agnostic. So it took him years and he was fighting with himself before he accepted Ramakrishna.

7 AUGUST 1943

Letter from Siddhartha (Nolini Sen's son)

1. Faith — blind, in Guru's words.
2. Religion is superfluous and injurious to India.
3. What is Sri Aurobindo doing? What has he done or what is he doing for India?

Sri Aurobindo: Why does Siddhartha want to argue about his faith? How can he prove his faith by arguments? He must know that it can't be done. And nowadays it is well known that one argues in favour of what one likes. It is not for arriving at the Truth. One can't arrive at the Truth by arguing.

He can find plenty of proof of people whose faith has succeeded where all outer reason was against them. There are many such things in history. For example, if England had only thought about her position and depended on reason, then she should have made peace with Hitler. She had no chance against Germany. But in spite of that she had faith that she could win and she is beginning to win.

It was after Dunkirk that I openly came out with my declaration supporting the Allies, and gave the contribution to the War Fund openly. If I had believed in appearances I should not have. It is in spite of contrary appearances that you have to act on faith. I had fixed the 15th August and the 15th September as the dates on which Germany would suffer defeat and both days it was defeated. In August, I believe, over London; and in September, the invasion idea and preparation.

Again, I wanted De Gaulle to become the Chief of the Free French armies in North Africa. There were many obstacles and the Americans came in with their pro-Vichy attitude. But I went on pressing and ultimately it has succeeded.

Also about the Tunisian campaign. There was a lot of swaying to and fro. But I persisted. The first time when the Allies attacked, they were only thirty thousand against three lakh Italians. If Wavell had gone to Tripoli at that time he would have succeeded. But they went to help Greece and naturally they had to retreat. But I went on pressing, and at last they took Tunisia.

If you depend upon reason then you cant know what is Truth. Germany fought Russia on her reasoning and won, and now Russia is fighting Germany on her reasoning and is winning. It is apparent that it is not reason which is giving them the success. There is, or must be, something behind that decides these things.

Our people cannot understand why one who has the Divine Consciousness or the Brahmic Consciousness should take up sides in a fight. That is all right if you want to remain in the Static Brahman. Then you can look upon the whole thing as Maya and it may not exist for you. But I believe in Brahman siding against Brahman — that is what the Brahman, I think, has always been doing.

The distinction between the Ishwara Consciousness and Brahmic Consciousness is not clear to many people, and also some of the Monists consider Ishwara to be a lower status than Brahman because it is dissolved in the Pralaya.

Krishna took sides openly in the Mahabharata and Rama also in the Ramayana. But Rama, some people do not consider an Avatar: they say he was not Self-conscious because he was weeping. Why? An Avatar cannot weep?

Sri Aurobindo had sent a message to the Congress regarding the Cripp's proposals.

Disciple: There are some people who even try to maintain that you knew fully well that your message to the Congress would fail and yet you sent it.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, I knew that there was very little chance of its success.

Disciple: But suppose you had known that it would certainly fail, then in that case you might have spared the trouble of going and coming to Duraiswamy.

Sri Aurobindo: No. Even if I had known for a certainty that it would fail, still it had to be done. It is a question of the play of forces and the important thing is that the other force should not be there. We cannot explain these things — this play of forces — to people who ask for a rational explanation, because it is so 'irrational'!

♍

3 OCTOBER 1943

Sri Aurobindo: It seems that in this war the human element is in the background — the whole thing is dominated so much by the machine. It may be my illusion, but the men of the past look so much larger in comparison with the leaders of the present crisis. Look at the generals: in Napoleon and his generals you find their human characteristics dominating, while in this great war, machines seem to dominate; the leaders do not come out very high.

Disciple: Can't machines be used to help men grow?

Sri Aurobindo: They can help to make life more comfortable, they can add to the convenience of life, but how can they aid men in spiritual or inner progress?

♍

4 OCTOBER 1943

C. Rajagopalachari in the Puja issue of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* has pleaded for the reconsideration and revival of the Cripps' proposals. Sri Aurobindo found this comment "late" but remarked that C.R. had got back his clarity of mind. As to the actual revival, when Wavell comes the difficulties he will face will be the I.C.S. and the Congress on two sides, and Jinnah on a third.

Anilbaran's article about the Bengal food situation created a great stir in the Ashram. Sri Aurobindo's advice about this was for an organisation *by the people themselves.* Mere government regulations or work would not do. After all, the Ministry is the peoples and so its dishonesty and want of public spirit — want of a tradition of honest public work — is our own fault. If people had rioted at some places, the Government would have been compelled to act.

The Jivatman descends here — but not geographically. It is a way of saying that it "takes up the consciousness", "organises the nature", etc. Who 'gets' Nirvana? or who passes away into the Absolute? It is the Jivatman.

The article by K. C. Varadachari was in answer to Malkani's. Does the term *chit* in Ramanuja's philosophy mean the surface consciousness?

Narayana, the Absolute, is indissolubly connected with the manifestation. You can't know him even if he has an existence independent of his manifestation.

Sri Aurobindo: I would agree with Varadachari that the Absolute is not knowable by the Mind. But, it is knowable to Itself. It is *sva-prakāśa* — self-illuminating.

Life Sketch of A. B. Purani

Ambalal Balkrishna Purani was born in Surat, Gujarat, on 26 May 1894. As a young man he was inspired by Sri Aurobindo, who was then a prominent leader of the Indian freedom movement. Resolved to help free his country from British rule, Purani helped to launch a youth movement that gained widespread popularity in Gujarat. At the age of twenty-four he visited Sri Aurobindo in Pondicherry, and settled there five years later, in 1923.

A. B. Purani was a prolific writer in Gujarati and translated many of Sri Aurobindo's writings into that language. He also wrote several books in English, including *The Life of Sri Aurobindo.* From 1938 to 1950 Purani served as one of Sri Aurobindo's personal attendants. Towards the end of his life he toured India, Africa, Europe and the United States, speaking to those interested in Sri Aurobindo's vision of life. He passed away in Pondicherry on 11 December 1963, at the age of seventy-one.

Note on the Text

The talks in this book were recorded by Sri Aurobindo's disciple A. B. Purani, who came to live in Pondicherry in March 1923. At that time Sri Aurobindo used to meet in the evenings with his disciples and hold informal conversations with them. Soon after his arrival, Purani began to take part in these talks. Recognising their importance, he took notes on them afterwards, while they were still fresh in his mind. Later he elaborated these notes into readable conversations.

The talks cover two periods, 1923-1926 and 1938-1943. The first period began in March 1923 and ended in November 1926, when Sri Aurobindo retired to his room for exclusive concentration on his sadhana. The second period began more than twenty years later, at the end of 1938, after Sri Aurobindo fractured his thigh. The doctors and others attending him, including Purani, soon started engaging him in conversation, and thus began a second round of talks. Purani's notes on these later talks cover a period of some five years, but they are not as regular or detailed as his notes on the early talks. It is not known when Purani worked up his notes and prepared them for publication; it may have been some years later.

The First Edition

Evening Talks was first published in a collection of three books; each book was called a "series", meaning a series of talks. The First Series came out in 1959, the Second Series in 1961, and the Third Series in 1966. All of them were edited by Purani. His editing of the First Series and Second Series was systematic and thorough; through a process of expansion and revision, he elaborated his original detailed notes into fluent, readable conversations. The editing of the Third Series was not as rigorous. Purani expanded his notes in the same way as for the first two series, but his revision of them was less extensive and consistent; he made very few changes towards

the end. It is evident that he was unable to complete the editing of these talks by the time of his death in 1965. The Third Series was brought out posthumously, in 1966.

The talks in the First Series and Second Series are arranged by subject in chapters; within each chapter, the talks are in chronological order. The talks in the Third Series are presented in simple chronological order.

The First Series and Second Series together contain all the talks of the early period (1923-26) chosen by Purani for publication and a selection from the later talks (1938-43). The Third Series contains talks of the later period that were not included in the first two series.

The Present Edition

The present (fourth) edition comprises the same talks included in the first, second and third editions, but in revised form. The revisions are of several kinds: (1) the correction of typographical, grammatical and factual errors; (2) the normalisation of spelling and capitalisation; (3) the revision of awkwardly phrased or unclear sentences; and (4) the reordering of a few talks that were out of chronological order.

The talks of the First Series and Second Series, well edited on the whole by Purani, have been very lightly revised by the present editors. The talks of the Third Series contained more errors, inconsistencies and awkwardly worded sentences than the talks in the first two series; for this reason, they have been revised more extensively. In revising the Third Series, the editors have introduced, in a few places, new material from Purani's original notebooks. These notebooks, as well as Nirodbaran's *Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, have been consulted wherever necessary in order to clear up doubtful points.

Publishing History

The First Series of *Evening Talks* was published in 1959, the Second Series in 1961. Both series were brought out by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and printed at its press in Pondicherry. The Third Series was issued in 1966; published by the Ashram, it was printed at two different presses in Surat. In 1970 a second edition of the First Series was published by the Ashram and printed at a press in Bombay. A second edition of the Second Series came out in 1974; the publisher and printer are not known. A second edition of the Third Series was apparently never issued. In 1982 a third edition containing all three series in a single volume was published by the Sri Aurobindo Society, Pondicherry, and printed at the All India Press, Pondicherry. A second impression, published by the Society and printed at the Ashram Press, came out in 1995. The present (fourth) edition is published by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and printed at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press.

List of Topics in Each Talk

Introduction

Part I	Sri Aurobindo's personality, his outer retirement; outside contacts after 1910; spiritual personalities: Vibhutis and Avatars; transformtion of human personality
Part II	The Home of the Guru
Part III	The Evening Sittings
Chapter 1	**Meeting the Master**
Part I	Author's first meeting, December 1918
Part II	Authors second meeting, March 1921
Part III	Meetings with others:
Nov 1920	Disciple: Nature of spiritual commune, self-reliance
Nov 1920	Sarala Devi: Non-cooperation, politics, Khilafat, Swaraj
09-04-23	Visitor: politics, community's life and dharma
11-04-23	Rajangam: Taking up Integral Yoga, difficulties, right attitude
28-04-23	Sadhak: Universal, Divine, Divine Power, pressure of descent

08-08-23	Velji Shah: Integral Yoga and external action
09-08-23	Gokuldas: Nishkama karma, surrender, Yoga done by Divine Shakti
28-09-23	Disciple: Open to Higher Power; peace, samata, knowledge
23-12-23	Athavale: Kartavyam Karma, mind, supramental Power, goal, faith
27-12-23	Athavale: Purusha, Prakriti, psychic, will, celibacy, obstacles, receiving Guru's help
01-01-24	Visitors: Spiritism, medium, Karmayoga
03-01-24	Raghunath: Rajayoga, Hathayoga
03-01-24	Amritlal: Human weaknesses
06-01-24	Ashram must keep away from politics
10-01-24	Does not see each and every visitor
16-01-24	Yoga and Adhar, madness, Charkha, Khadi, Tegart
09-02-24	Gandhi, art, Khadi, Swaraj, Khilafat
03-08-24	Levels of mind: pure, vital, physico-vital, and physical
04-08-24	Pure will and vital will
17-08-24	H. Amin's interview with Gandhi regarding Sri Aurobindo and his Ashram; non-violence

05-01-25 Lajpat Rai, P. Tandon: democracy, Congress program, national honour

12-07-25 Velji Shah: Sadhana, peace, sheaths, experiences, Shuddhi

21-09-25 Narmadashankar Vyas: Fitness, Gayatri, calm, action of Shakti, meditation

Chapter 2 **On Books and Letters**

On Books

12-09-23 Islamic civilisation and *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Sufism

10-10-23 Fitness for Yoga, *The Yoga and Its Objects*, Bhakti and Grace

09-02-24 Kalelkar's *The Gospel of Swadeshi*, Gandhi on machines, wars

24-04-24 Jules Romains' *Eyeless Sight*: centres of vision; Mother; Siddhis

12-06-24 Maud Sharma, Harin; Subba Rao and Gandhi

23-08-25 Shaw's *Joan of Arc*

04-12-25 Mashruwala's article in *Sabarmati*; Coué's *Marvel of Couéism*

14-04-26 Bucke's *Cosmic Consciousness* Sri Aurobindo's experience

12-05-26 Geley's *Ectoplasme et Clairvoyance*, vital plane;

	agnosticism; spirituality, science, spiritism; J.C. Bose; siddhis
19-05-26	Ossowiecki on clairvoyance; Mother's occult experiments; occult races; vital beings
11-02-26	Einstein's Relativity; Reason and Knowledge; Absolutes, "Laws of Nature", Yogic and other forces, Cagliostro; Tantra; action of Truth
22-06-26	Patanjali's *Rajayoga*
31-08-26	Time, Space, Science; consciousness, Maya, Matter, Gods and humans
15-01-39	Healing; Science, Eddington; Spengler's *Decline of the West*, Morris's *Aryan Path*, history and destiny, Arabs, Greeks, Romans, modern Europe, human progress
17-01-39	*Vishnu Purāna*: Krishna, Buddha
18-01-39	Huxley's *Ends and Means*: Napoleon, Caesar, Kamal Pasha, Gandhi; avatars and religions
27-02-39	Sri Aurobindo: linguist and magician
20-12-39	S.K Maitra on Kant and Gita; Religion and Reason
25-12-39	Gravitation: Einstein, Ouspensky, Eddington
26-12-39	Space, Time, Brahman, Energy
16-05-40	Spenglcr on instinct and human progress
26-08-40	C.C. Dutt's review of *The Life Divine*, Sri

	Aurobindo on himself
04-09-40	Kalidasa's poetry
17-09-40	Space: non-existence, curving, expanding, the sun's weight
14-12-40	A.B. Roy on the Gita and *The Life Divine*, Para Prakriti
1942	Pralaya, Creation, Lila
10-03-43	Kulkarni's *Yogi Aurobindo Ghose*
25-03-43	Jnanananda on Raja Yoga and Super-ego
27-03-43	Jnanananda's Super-ego, paths of Yoga, plagiarism
06-04-43	Hopkins' *Collected Poems*
08-04-43	Mehdi Imam's *Poetry of the Invisible*, Sufism, poetic criticism
05-05-43	Sisir Kumar Maitra's article on *Kathopanishad*: 'Value', attaining the Eternal
11-05-43	Bharati Sarabhai's *People's Well*
20-08-43	Malkani's "Mayavada", *The Life Divine*, Europe
20-11-43	K.R.S. Iyengar's *Homage to Sri Aurobindo*
	On Letters
25-09-23	C.R. Das' *Forward*

20-11-23	Receptivity needs preparation, strong Adhar
08-01-24	Pitfalls in Yoga
10-01-24	Sri Aurobindo on himself, on his brother Manmohan
10-07-24	Samadhi, Sushupti, in Upanishads; Sri Aurobindo's jail experiences
25-11-24	Yoga and marriage, sex, psychic union, wife as Shakti
21-01-25	Yogic knowledge, politics and Yoga, call to Yoga
15-09-25	Initiation, purification; Integral Yoga, central being, vital, Asuric power
04-10-25	Yoga: marriage, renunciation, love, passivity-activity
07-10-25	Karma Yoga, Raja Yoga, and this Yoga
09-10-25	Yoga: incompatible with rajasic action; experience primary
12-10-25	Yoga: energy, tamas, *Arya*, silence, reason, instinct, intelligence in animals
21-10-25	Sadhana and sex; sadhana without caring to lift others
02-11-25	Humanity: this Yoga, religion, Supermen, supramental body, *corps glorieux*
26-12-25	Visions and change of consciousness; call to Yoga;

Theosophy

22-02-26 Subhas Bose on Sri Aurobindo; regenerating Indians, village uplift

23-06-23 Psychic being, Atman, central being, knowledge by identity, compassion, Agni

21-08-26 Karma: Kartavyam, Nishkama; Sri Aurobindo's Karma; Bolshevism; Chandernagore

27-01-39 Vivekananda's letter: Vairagya, Nirvana, surrender, faith, ambition

06-02-39 Lajpat Rais letter: Karma, Vairagya

Chapter 3 On Medicine

11-11-23 Yoga: balance, development; imagination, inspiration, intuition

05-07-24 Dr. Abraham's theory of disease

19-09-25 Samadhi, science, Yoga; Dr. Kobayashi, Coué; Pranic currents, brain, sleep, dreams

20-09-25 Tuberculosis, depression; curing by Sri Aurobindo's force

26-09-25 Curing by Sri Aurobindo's force; longevity; origin of humanity, Atlantis

07-10-25 Good cheer in ill-health

11-10-25 Coué's method, will and imagination, faith; Yoga and action; 'rich development' in Yoga

14-10-25	Healing by Sri Aurobindo's force; Grace, psychic awakening; madness, peace, human relations
05-11-25	Immunity: in Hatha Yoga and Pranayama; incorruptible body
05-12-25	Contacting the dead; Sadhana: external life, emotions, mental development
30-01-26	Yogic cure by Anushthan, by Mantra, by will and faith
04-02-26	Perfect body; occult phenomena, dematerialisation; life-force: matter and plants
20-12-38	Public life; Homeopathy, Yogic force; Guru and disciples; vital interchange, vampires
21-12-38	Ayurveda, Hippocrates, Galen
25-12-38	Medical science, totalitarianism; European and other cultures; systems of government
30-12-38	Homeopathic dosing; possession, mania; Sri Aurobindo in England; Japanese culture; European civilisation
10-01-39	Systems of medicine; curing by yogic power
25-08-39	Sri Aurobindo's accident; Law of Karma
20-03-43	Cure through Sri Aurobindo's force
19-07-43	Illness, vital being and physical being, effect of physical Tapasya

Chapter 4	**On Art**
22-06-24	O.C. Gangooly on modern Indian painting
26-01-26	Art and spirituality; ancients had greater conception and a calm strength
28-01-26	Indian painting; *chaitya* for psychic; *maithuna* in temple art; Gangooly on *The Foundations of Indian Culture*
31-03-26	Abanindranath's and Nandalal's paintings; Tagore's poetry
31-12-38	Picasso, Surrealism, Elie Faure on art
11-01-39	German art; modern poetry and fiction, Cross, Shakespeare; Scott
24-01-39	Art books don't sell; Greek art
12-05-40	Fry on Impressionism, Michelangelo, Tolstoy, primitive an, Cubism
14-01-41	Cézanne, Matisse, modern art
Chapter 5	**On Poetry**
22-05-25	Indians writing in English and Hindi
12-10-26	Sri Aurobindo's philosophy; expressing higher planes; types of poetry
12-12-38	Poetry: Tagore's, Vaishnava, symbolic, mystic, occult, Vedic

13-12-38	Inner hearing, best poetry, Mantras of Rishis, Shakespeare
03-01-39	Ferrer and English hexameter; Manmohan, Binyon, Phillips, Wilde
09-01-39	Epic form: Meredith, Hugo, Dante, Keats, Naidu, Harin, Masefield, Morris, Dutt
06-01-40	Tagore on poetry, Kalelkar on art and form
07-01-40	Gandhi, Tagore, and Kalelkar on art for *janatā-janārdana*
17-01-40	Criteria for judging poets
18-01-40	Creative force: Blake, Shakespeare, Yeats, A.E., Abercrombie, "Hound of Heaven"
18-01-40	Creative force: Meredith, Tagore, Shakespeare, Shelley, Milton, Dante
19-01-40	Creative force: Meredith, Tagore, Shakespeare, Shelley, Milton, Dante
19-01-40	Lyrics with creative force: Tagore, Nishikanta, Shelley, Keats
27-01-40	Great poetry: "The Hound of Heaven", Villon, Petrarch, Dante, Simonides, Pindar
26-09-43	Law governing literary activities
28-09-43	Abercrombie on purpose and experience in great poetry

Chapter 6	**On Beauty**
12-08-26	Beauty: elements and sources; spiritual experience and physical beauty; perfect beauty
27-08-26	Beauty and devotion; beauty: elements, power, expression, essence; training in art; inspiration; mind and poetry
24-01-39	Sense of beauty and race; Sri Aurobindo at Baroda
12-10-42	Beauty: delight, Shankaracharya, form, Brahman; spirituality and art
Chapter 7	**On Congress and Politics**
07-03-24	Khilafat and Turkey; Islam and Bahaism; Indian politicians
08-03-24	Abolition of Khilafat; Indian politics
11-03-24	Mahomed AH, Khilafat; Islamic culture; Dr. Gaur; Congress politics, Montford Reforms
14-03-24	Malaviya; Sanitation; Mrs. Besant; Non-cooperation, Khadi; Sri Aurobindo in 1909; national education programmes; saving humanity
08-04-24	Gandhi on: Council entry, education, Gita; Khadi and Swaraj
09-04-24	Sources of Gandhi's ideas
31-05-24	Swaraj, boycott, Charkha, Hindu-Muslim unity, brahmacharya

07-06-24	Rasputin; eligibility for A.I.C.C.
17-06-24	Tagore's internationalism
19-06-24	Gandhi and Swarajists; Congress; Charkha
22-06-24	Swaraj through Khadi
30-06-24	Satyagraha and Swarajists; Congress resolution on litigants
03-07-24	Stealing
04-07-24	Gandhi's "Defeated and Humbled"; Congress resolutions
15-07-24	Gujarat Congress's compulsory spinning resolution
02-08-24	Motilal Nehru and Gandhi
13-09-24	Tarakeshwar affair; Das and Kamal; Gandhi, Christianity, Karma, *Faust*, spinning
10-10-25	Sri Aurobindo and Moropant Joshi
23-10-25	Spirit and matter; spiritism; the 'stone-throwing' incident
24-10-25	Franco-Riff War, truth and media; Indian character, politics
07-04-26	Indian Princes; forms of government in India and Europe
29-06-26	European and Indian political institutions; Hindu-

	Muslim problem; nationhood
04-08-26	Dharma and democracy, social and political classification
08-09-26	Industriafism and India, wealth and progress
Chapter 8	**On Non-Violence**
28-03-23	Non-violence and Gita
18-04-23	Gandhian Ahimsa, Vasishtha and Kamadhenu; Hindu-Muslim unity; Sanskrit
23-07-23	Satyagraha, Puritanism, Kshatriya spirit; suffering and fanaticism; Gandhi and labour problems; Satyagraha and Prahlad; political dogmatism
26-07-23	Non-vegetarianism, pity, nervous repulsion, samata, compassion
10-05-24	Gandhi and humility; Romain Rolland, the Indian spirit, Gandhi, Tagore, Buddhism
17-05-24	Gandhi and boycott of British goods
20-05-24	Local politics; Tarakeshwar affair; Chrisdanity and Buddhism; Gandhi
02-06-24	Gandhi on Gita, Dayananda, Arya Samaj
06-10-25	Satyagraha of prisoners in Andamans
Chapter 9	**On Sadhana**
09-04-23	Supramental Yoga and ordinary life

13-04-23	Dattatreya Yoga; Sri Aurobindo's sadhana with Lele
29-05-23	Spirit and Life; mental development, Shuddhi, change of consciousness
11-11-23	This Yoga: sanity, perfect balance
31-01-24	Collective sadhana
26-02-24	Degrees of perfection; infinite possibilities realisable; *icchā mrityu*
16-10-25	Guru and disciple; Abhyasa and Tapasya
02-03-26	Higher Power and receptivity; Guru and personal effort; Tirupati; central being and sincerity; conditions for transformation
09-04-26	Drinking, narcotics, Samadhi; Sri Aurobindo's experiences
18-05-26	Having a Shakti; speed of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga; 'external' work, 'isms'
08-08-26	Life on other planets; preconceived notions; present-day philosophy
18-08-26	Supermanhood, gradations of Supermind; power of will; origin of speech
06-09-26	Guru and disciple, Grace, preferences; consent for Divine to act; measure of spirituality; outer success and inner progress; energy from Yoga; money power

09- 09-26 Hostiles: controlling and transforming them; Higher Power and Adhar

10- 09-26 Chakras; aim of Vaman Avatar; Mind and Truth

20-09-26 Fitness for Yoga; success and fall in Yoga; music and Theosophy in Japan

26-09-26 Higher Power and mind; sincerity and humility

02-10-26 Forms of government; Divine work; realisation of God and change of nature; Jiva and central being; faith

Chapter 10 **On Vedic Interpretation**

1923 Symbolism in Vedic hymns

08-07-24 Poverty never the Indian ideal

04-06-26 Symbolism, numbers, Tantra

Chapter 11 **On Education**

May 1923 Montessori principle; principles to bring out the true individual

26-08-26 *Arya*; education in ancient and classical India; Yoga and external personality; greatness and morality

Chapter 12 **On Miracles**

26-03-24 Life-span in Puranas; Rama and Krishna; mastery over body, supramentalising the body

24-04-24 Coué's method of cure; psychic phenomena and cure; local politics

21-09-25 Earthquakes in Japan; Tamas in India; work in the physical

06-10-25 Palm-lines change, thumb-impressions

08-06-26 Influence of stars on life

18-06-26 Astrology, clairvoyance, fate, earth-memory; spirits of places and nations

28-06-26 Maharshi, Tailanga Swami, Ramakrishna, St. Francis, Sri Aurobindo's experiences

30-07-26 Meditation time; omens, premonitions; ghosts; fear, pineal gland, telepathy

06-08-26 Work for the world; nations living entities; ancient Egypt; India and supreme Truth

3-09-26 Spirit-communication, table-rapping; thought-forms, obsession, possession by spirits

4-09-26 Moving objects by 'will-power'; mesmerism, spirit-communication

Chapter 13 **On Psychology**

30-05-23 Sri Aurobindo's dream: secret of earth-nature

10-07-23 Soul, rebirth, supramentalisation

01-06-24 Spider-mind

04-08-24	Vital will and mental will
30-08-25	Psycho-analyst on Hindu-Muslim unity; psychology; Freud, Coué
18-10-25	Animal mind
19-10-25	Feline vitality; statistics unreliable
Apr 1926	Nervous shrinking, pity, Ahimsa, Kartavyam karma
29-05-26	Possession by vital beings, capital punishment, soul
22-06-26	Inner being, psychic being. Supermind, *kārana sharira*; liberation; aspiration, psychic being, spirituality and suffering; Gandhi, Christianity, Patanjali; kinds of Bhaktas
25-06-26	Suffering, asceticism; historicity of Christ, Rama, Krishna
02-07-26	What is life? Supermind and material world
09-07-26	Vital possession, suicide, spiritual evolution
10-07-26	Hostile forces and Yoga; memory of previous births
06-08-26	Feelings, emotions; vital desires, thought-movements; parts of being; attaining the Truth
13-08-26	Mental, vital, physical, supermind; physical consciousness, aesthetic creation; memory

14-08-26 Aesthetic, psychic, and mental beings; beauty: physical, psychic, spiritual progress

28-09-26 Purusha and planes of being; Taittiriya; the Trinity

03-10-26 Humility; sense of humour in spirituality

Chapter 14 **On Movements**

30-04-23 Arunachal Mission; committee of avatars

05-04-24 Bahaism and Mahommedans; siddhis and miracles

06-03-26 'divine marriage'; Chittagong centre; oratory and thought

12-03-26 Bhawanipore centre; Siddhi and effort; Bhakti Yoga; seeing Light; Hatha Yoga

06-05-26 Letter to Tirupari; this Yoga: vital being, asceticism; conditions for meditation

Chapter 15 **On the Gods and Asuras**

04-04-24 Influence of Supramental Yoga on beings of the higher and the physical planes

May 1924 The term Asura

09-12-25 Avatars and occult powers; Sri Aurobindo and the Russian Revolution

12-01-26 Avatarhood

01-06-26 News media, democracy, lowering standards of life; men, gods, asuras

15-06-26 Asuras, Rakshasas, elemental beings; laws of nature; yogis and food, fasting

26-06-26 Lesser and greater gods

13-07-26 Manifestation of higher beings; gods and Supermind; what is Supermind?

17-08-26 *Akshara* consciousness; attaining plane of Gods; Krishna; laws of Matter

22-08-26 Forms of Gods, human forms

24-08-26 Plane and personalities of Gods; collective personalities of nations; Real-Idea

06-11-26 *Amsha* of Gods; manifesting godheads

09-11-26 Descent of the plane of Gods; preparing the Adhar

Nov 1926 Summary of talks about the descent of Gods

Chapter 16 **The 15th of August 1923 - 1926**

1923 Morning speech: How to observe the 15th; the Truth it symbolises; surrender

Evening talk: His Sadhana; three layers of Supermind; physical immortality

1924 Morning celebration: Author's account

Morning speech: Aim and nature of this Yoga

	Evening talk: His Sadhana; His death; His Sadhana and universal conditions
1925	Morning speech: Aim and nature of this Yoga
	Evening talk: His Sadhana, the possibility of Supermind's descent
1926	Morning speech: Significance of the 15th; what sadhaks should do
	Evening talk: Success of this Yoga; resistance of material world
Chapter 17	**December 1938**
10-12-38	Why Pondicherry; *Yogic Sādhan*; Ramakrishna; faith, vigilance; physical siddhi; Grace
11-12-38	Justice, Karma, Grace; prophesying; peace; thoughts and 'thinking'
12-12-38	Ahimsa; curing depression, anger, ego; self-control in Yoga
13-12-38	Meditation; visions; realising the divine consciousness; *bhedābhedā*; Adwaita
14-12-38	Cagliostro, Nostradamus; Buddhism; meditation; Sri Aurobindo and Mother
15-12-38	Mental intuition and medical diagnosis; Kundalini
18-12-38	Americans; Supermind; Barin; Sri Aurobindo in England, Baroda, Calcutta, Pondicherry

22-12-38 Right attitude, psychic control; love for all; transformation; fall in Yoga; Intermediate zone and guru-giri

23-12-38 Divine's Omnipotence; Christianity, Buddhism, Mohammedanism;
Ramana Maharshi

26-12-38 *Bāla-bhāva*; self-offering; meditation; physical being; dreams, visions, fantasies; Pranam and meditation with Mother

27-12-38 Municipalities; Indian system of government. Congress organisation; Hindi *vs*. English; racial persecution, Golden Age, Supermind, evolution and Avatars, Science

28-12-38 Doctors and Greek Augurs; European war, generals and soldiers

29-12-38 Psychic being, Ramana Maharshi's experience; Tagore's meditation; choosing a guru; spiritual realisations; truth in science and political systems; immortality; intellectuals

Chapter 18 **January 1939**

01-01-39 Meditation; divine consciousness

02-01-39 Ashram, sadhana, work, peace, silence, emptiness; Asuric tapasya

03-01-39 Trance, hypnosis, hypnotism, exteriorisation, occultism

04-01-39	Fasting, diseases; person and personality; liberation; yoga and illness; psycho-analysis
05-01-39	Sri Aurobindo: Yoga, politics, planchette, Nirvana
06-01-39	Sadhana and ego; humility, Sri Aurobindo at Calcutta; communism, dictatorship
07-01-39	Removing the ego; psychic individuality; changing the nature; "brilliant period" of the Ashram; newcomers and demands of Yoga
08-01-39	Hitler, Gandhi, the English; Bengal during Swadeshi; Sri Aurobindo's father and brothers
12-01-39	A child sadhika; Stalin; Japan's agenda; Congress; European politics
14-01-39	Yogic predictions, astrology; Yoga and Westerners; faith; former sadhaks
16-01-39	Materialisation, reviving the dead; *āshish* to ashes; Ashram and public works; Gandhism; Sri Aurobindo in Baroda and England; Ahimsa
17-01-39	Shakti; Bhakti; Impersonal and Personal God; *Vishnu Purāna*; Veda, Tantra, Vedanta
19-01-39	Problems of society, communes; propaganda, morality; psychic and evolution; saints and yogis; boons of Krishna and Shiva; Bhakti, Jnana, Buddhism

20-01-39 European politics and war. Western visitors and Ashramites

21-01-39 African Indians and Gandhism; destiny, inner voice; Sri Aurobindo, revolutionaries, Nivedita

22-01-39 Fasting; Russian and Japanese armies; Mussolini and France; Western visitors and Ashram; inner voice and standards of right and wrong

23-01-39 Cosmic Will, Karma, Mukti; Cosmic Spirit, psychic. Overmind; Hitler, Mussolini; Nirvana, Self, *adhikāra*;. Yoga and external conduct; philosophy, Sadhana, Divine Light

24-01-39 Politicians and power; Polycrates, Asuras; humanity, Ashram

26-01-39 Political, human values; political organisation, Life; Indian politics; national unification: India, Germany, Japan; Hitler, Mussolini, Kamal Pasha, Stalin; Socialism in India

28-01-39 Hathayogic feats; animal intelligence; Congress politics

29-01-39 Hitler, Subhas, Nehru; nation building: wealth, education, taxation;
Englishmen

Chapter 19 **February - May 1939**

03-02-39 Yoga, experiences, fear, health, ancestral religion; Subhas, Tagore, Nehru, Gandhi; British politics, Palestine; Roosevelt, Hitler, England and France;

corruption in public life

05-02-39 Nivedita; Jainism; Sri Aurobindo's experiences; European war, Roosevelt; Indian socialists

07-02-39 Subhas, Socialism; Spanish civil war: France and Italy;
England and France

09-02-39 Indian politics and politicians; Princes of Baroda; poetry and masses

19-02-39 Socialism and Communism

21-02-39 Political system for India

24-02-39 Mind and disease; collective or national being; nation as Shakti

25-02-39 Satyagraha and students; labour strikes in Europe and India

12-03-39 Nehru, Gandhi, Subhas

06-05-39 Arjava, medical diagnosis, intuition

16-05-39 Spiritual experience, resistance in the physical, and the ego

May 1939 The Divine's Omnipotence

Chapter 20 **November - December 1939**

19-11-39 Love and physical relation; human love, love for the Divine

21-11-39 Human love, friendship, love for the Divine

14-15-39 Yogic action on world, Swami Dayananda of Bengal, Avatarhood; Rosicrucians, mysticism, ego and self; Buddhi and Mukti; Kant; disinterested action; Reason and Truth

15-12-39 Reason, spiritual experience; the Absolute, knowledge by identity; Siddhis

30-12-39 Mahasabha, Congress, "Vande Mataram", Hindu-Muslim question, Nehru, Jinnah

Chapter 21 **1940**

04-01-40 Aryan-Dravidian question; Sri Aurobindo's "Trance"

05-01-40 Successful action: intuition, intellect

08-01-40 Science: elements, matter, energy, causation, Being behind. Brahman

10-01-40 Japa and Kirtan; nature and Yoga; Huxley, Tagore, Sharat Chandra

23-02-40 Jainism on creation, Tirthankars, liberation, Sankhya; poverty and philanthropy

Feb 1940 Bijoy Goswami's last years; charity, poverty, and turning to God

01-03-40 Barin Ghose; Yoga and engaging in controversy; politicians and real work

25-04-40 The Mother

20-05-40	Asuras, "Lord of Nations", Hitler, barbarism, Asuric influences, intellectuals
22-05-40	Hitler's Germany, Nazism
23-05-40	Socialism in England; Gandhi
15-06-40	Asura behind Hitler, astrologers; knowledge and power
17-06-40	Resistance to Hitler: France, England, Poland, Finland
18-06-40	Resistance of Hitler: Anglo-French union; other European nations
19-06-40	Anglo-French alliance, Churchill, France, Germany; Hiranyagarbha and Supermind
22-06-40	French warfare; Uruguay incident and Monroe doctrine; Russia and Turkey
23-06-40	French armistice; Rumania
25-06-40	Sri Aurobindo's will and the Divine Will; humanity and war
27-06-40	Sri Aurobindo's English
21-07-40	State and force; dictatorship *vs.* democracy
03-08-40	Forces behind War and the Bridsh Empire; new world order and the Supreme's Vision
18-08-40	Music of Tagore, Dilip, Bhishmadeva; pure music

15-09-40 Is the individual a puppet?

28-11-40 Gandhi's will; Sri Aurobindo and the War, Englishmen; Indian politics

29-11-40 Misuse of Sri Aurobindo's pictures in commerce

31-12-40 Receptivity

Chapter 22 **1941 – 1943**

04-01-41 The Inconscient; right attitude in sadhana; Sri Aurobindo's writings in College syllabus

24-01-41 Blake's art

1941-42 Feminine and male aspects of the Divine; Grace and Tapasya

12-03-43 Sadhana and external nature

26-03-43 English poetry

16-04-43 General Toczyski's visit to the Ashram

17-04-43 Toczyski meets the Mother

18-04-43 Poland and Russia; America's imperialistic aims; spiritual cure

19-04-43 Spiritism; ego and effort in Yoga; Guru and his external nature

07-08-43 Faith and reason; Sri Aurobindo's interventions in the War, Brahman *vs.* Brahman, Sri Aurobindo's message about Cripps' Proposals

03-10-43	Human element in the past and present wars; machines and human progress
04-10-43	Rajagopalachari, Wavell; public spirit; Jivatman; Mind and the Absolute